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THE
GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

—

VOL. III.

THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF

“The Chronicles of Carlingford,”

&c., &c.

“A lady richly left . . .
An unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised :
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn.”—*Merchant of Venice*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON :

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1880.

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THE
GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

CHANGED.

LUCY spent two or three days after this in comparative solitude. Her friends, both the Rushtons and Mrs. Stone agreed in feeling that it would be indecorous to make any rush at her. It was a suggestion forced upon each of them by the too great eagerness of the other, and both concluded that it would be well to adopt a more dignified course, and to leave her to herself for the moment. Katie Russell had gone on a visit of two or three days' duration, and Lucy found herself thus at full liberty to realise her loneliness. The weather, as it hap-

pened, was very hot, and Jock and she were shut up for the greater part of the day in the glaring room, where there was no provision for very hot weather, no sun-blinds or shutters, but everything open to the blazing sun in the day, and all lighted up with blazing gas at night. When after those long and weary days little Jock went tired and cross to bed, unwilling to go, yet glad to get the day over, his sister sat alone in the pink drawing-room in the unshadowed flood of the gas-light, and thought with the tenderest longing of all she had left behind, and with a sinking at her heart beyond describing, of all that was before her. The Fords were in their parlour below, which they preferred, he reading his paper, she mending stockings tranquilly, at the table with its oil-cloth cover. Lucy had not required any derangement of their habits. She sat with them meekly at table, without asking for anything beyond what they chose to give her; but she had found at once that, after the repast was over, she was expected to return to her own luxurious apartment, the room which they were proudly conscious had cost more than any other room in

Farafield, not to speak of the trouble that had been taken over it—and in which there was a piano and books, and all the things with which girls are supposed to be amused. Lucy had been called upon by two of the most important people in Farafield, she had taken several walks and one ride, and many substantial meals had been set before her at their comfortable table; what could any girl in her senses want more? And now she had that beautiful drawing-room to return to, where there was provision for both mind and body, sofas to repose upon, and a piano to play, and books to read, and where she could certainly gratify herself with the consciousness of being mistress of a room which had not its equal in Farafield. Mrs. Ford saw no reason why she should give up her own evening leisure, the purring quiet of that final hour before bed-time, when she sat content after supper was over, and all the affairs of the day concluded. She did her duty by Lucy. She bought sweetbreads and other delicacies, instead of the beefsteak which was so much cheaper, and which Ford liked just as well as the greatest dainty. She spared no expense upon her guest. She was ready to give her a cup of tea half a

dozen times a day. She had planned a variety of puddings that there might be something different at every meal: and to conclude, she had given Lucy the best of advice. What could she be expected to do more?

But Lucy sat very disconsolate in front of the shining steel fire-place filled up with shavings, amid that blaze of gas, without even the little stir of a fire which might have given companionship at another season. She felt like a stranded sailor, like some one shipwrecked on a very clean, bright, polished desert island, where, however, there was not even the consolation of struggling for your living, to keep you alive. She pondered all things that had happened, and that were going to happen. It had given her a painful sensation to hear Mrs. Stone speak of the Russells, and of the money which had come to them, which was just enough to enable them to live in comfort, as Lucy had intended. Had that been a failure, that first effort? And then she thought of the new claimant, the poor gentleman whom Mrs. Stone had hoped might be Lord Chancellor one day, and who was only able to be tutor to Jock. Surely it would be a right thing

to give him enough to remove anxiety, as Mrs. Stone had said. And this time Lucy thought she would take care that there was enough, that no one should say it was a pittance. This idea made her face glow with as much shame as if she had cheated these poor people, to whom she had meant to be kind. How was she to know what was enough? especially for a gentleman. Oh, Lucy thought, if I could but ask some one! If some one would but tell me! but who was there whom she could consult on such a subject? Her guardians, instead of helping her, would certainly do all they could to hinder her. They would put every kind of obstacle in her way. Instead of aiding her to make her calculations and ascertain how much was wanted, they would beat her down to the last penny, and try to persuade her that half of what she wanted to give would do. How difficult was this commission she held, this office of dispenser, almoner of posthumous bounty! Oh, if her father had but done it himself!—he was old, he had experience, he must have known much better than she could know. But here Lucy stopped short, and bethought herself of the conclusion

that had been forced upon her, that poor papa did not understand. The world in which her timid footsteps were finding out painfully unaccustomed tracks, was one of which even his keen eyes had not found out the conditions. In her stumblings and gropings she had already discovered more than his three score and ten years of keen, imperfect theory had taught him. And now it was her part to suffer all the inconveniences and vexations, which in his ignorance he had fixed upon her life. It never occurred to Lucy to make any effort to escape from them, or even to remain quiescent and refrain from doing the difficult things he had left her to do. She was determined to execute his will in every detail. Should she die even of this *ennui* and loneliness, she would yet bear it until the appointed moment; and, though she might have no more success than with the Russells, still she must flounder on. If she could only find somebody to help her, to give her a little guidance, to tell her how much, not how little, she ought to give. There was one indeed who might be a help to her, who would understand. But was it possible that even Sir Tom had deserted her? Three

days, and he had not come to see her! At this thought there came into Lucy's eyes something that felt very like a tear.

This, however, was the last of these silent days. In the morning Katie Russell burst upon her, all radiant with pleasure, "Oh, what a lucky girl you are!" Katie cried, "you have got all we used to talk of, Lucy. I never thought it would come true; but here you are, just looking the same as ever, though you have been living among swells; and come down to dazzle us all at Farafield, with beautiful horses, and heaps of money, and everybody after you. To think that all this should have happened to you, and nothing at all to me."

Lucy did not like her friend's tone. What had come over her that everything seemed to hurt her? "I don't think very much has happened to me," she said. "What has happened was all before I left here."

Katie shook her head and her curly locks, till she had almost shaken them off. "I know a great deal more than you think. I know what you were doing in London, and how you went riding about, and turning people's heads. What

a lucky girl you are, with everything that heart can desire! I don't envy you, not wicked envy, because you are always as good as gold, and never give yourself airs; but you *are* a lucky girl. You don't even know how different we poor ones are. I have never turned anyone's head," said Katie, with a sigh.

"Do not talk of anything so silly," said Lucy blushing, she did not quite know why. "I think you are laughing at me—and to laugh at me is not kind, for I am not clever as you are, and cannot make fun of you. Katie, tell me all about yourself, what you are doing; and tell me how they all are at Hampstead, and if they have got into the new house."

"I am doing—I don't know what I am doing," said Katie, "dancing attendance on Mrs. Stone and old Southernwood. They are going to get me a situation in some *nice* family. I wish the nice family would turn up, for I am very tired waiting and wasting my holidays in this old place. It is nice being here? Oh, I know what you will say, it is very nice, and I am very ungrateful. But, though it is nice, it is a school, Lucy; and mamma does not want me at home, and I

have got no other place to go. Lady Langton has been very kind, she asked me to go there for three days. But it's dreary always coming back to school, for the White House is only school when all is said. They are all right at Hampstead, so far as I know. Did you hear what happened? Mamma has come in to some money. It is not a very great sum, but it is a great help. It was some old relations, that no one had ever thought of, and mamma says it might just as well have been the double, for they were *dreadfully* rich. But anyhow it has been a great help. With what she had before I believe they have quite enough to live on now, without doing anything," Katie said, with a little pride.

To all this Lucy listened with a countenance blank of all expression. She had been half afraid of her friend's gratitude; but there was something in this complete ignorance which was very bewildering. And when she looked at her own generosity through Katie's eyes, so to speak, and saw it *on the other side*, she felt, too, that "it might as well have been the double," and contemplated her own action with a mixture of shame and regret, instead of the satisfaction

which she had vainly felt at first. And this little discovery made her first wound smart all the more. A certain fear crept over her. She would have liked to stop her ears from further revelations had she been able. But as that was impossible, Lucy listened patiently, with a blank countenance, trying hard to dismiss all appearance of feeling from her face.

“Mamma would like me to stay at home too,” Katie continued. “She cannot bear me to be a governess. But I could not do it; stay at home and sink down into Hampstead tea-parties—oh, I could not do it! If I get into a good family, Maud and the others will stand by me, and I shall have some fun at least and see life. To have only enough to live on, and to live at Hampstead, is more than I *could* put up with. Bertie, he has gone into chambers, he doesn’t live with mamma now. I don’t blame him, do you, Lucy? It must have been so slow for him, a young man. And now he has some money of his own, of course he has himself to think of. He is always—” Katie said slowly, watching her friend’s face; “*always* talking of you.”

Lucy did not make any response; but she was

surprised by this unexpected change in the strain, and looked up involuntarily, with a half inquiry in her eyes.

“Oh, constantly!” said Katie, with a mixture of natural mischief and more serious purpose, not quite able to give up the pleasure of laughing at her companion, yet very seriously determined to help her brother. “He says you are cross about that dedication. How could you be cross about it? such a lovely dedication, making you into a famous person all at once. It is just the same as Dante did, and Petrarch, and all the poets, Bertie says. And it has brought him luck. Lucy, do you mind? He wants so much to come down here.”

“Why should I mind?” Lucy asked. Bertie Russell had floated out of her recollection; why should his movements concern her? even the dedication, and all the annoyance it had brought, affected her no more.

“That is quite true, why should you mind?” Katie said, with some pique. “One more or less doesn’t matter, when there are so many. He wants to come down and study the scenery for his next book. He means to lay the scene here;

won't it be exciting? People will be sure to say he has studied the characters too."

"I don't think there are many characters here," Lucy said.

"Oh, don't you think so? If I were to write a book I know whom I should put in; the Missis and little Southernwood, and that fat St. Clair; and old Mademoiselle finding out everything about everybody. Oh, I should soon make up a book if I could write—I wish I could write," cried Katie, with flashing eyes.

Was it really so? Was Katie vulgar too? Lucy felt herself shrink involuntarily. She asked herself whether, in the old schoolgirl days, there had been chatter like this which had not disgusted her, or if Katie had deteriorated.

"Do not speak so," she said; "Katie, it is not like you."

"Oh, yes, it is quite like me. I always was wicked, you were the good one, Lucy. I hope Bertie will take them all off; and I hope you will not be cross to him, Lucy; that would take all the heart out of him. Poor old Bertie! he thinks you are an angel, that is all he knows."

"I am never cross," said Lucy, wounded.

What had happened to her? Had her eyes been anointed by that disenchanting touch which turns all the glories of fairyland into dross and tinsel? or was she really cross with everybody and out of tune? She could not tell herself which it was.

"You are cross now," cried Katie, growing red; and then the hasty tears started to her eyes, and she complained that her friend was "changed." What could Lucy say? either it was true, or it was Katie that was changed. "You are a great lady now," the girl cried, "with grand friends and everything you wish for; and I am only a poor governess, not fit company for you."

This reproach went to Lucy's heart. She could not defend herself from such an accusation; it took her entirely without defence, without the power of saying anything for herself; and she had never had any quarrels in the old days. Thus the two girls parted, Katie running across the Common, with red eyes, in high dudgeon, though there was so little cause for it, while Lucy stood at the window looking after her piteously, and with an aching heart.

Changed ! yes, everything was changed, either within or without : but which poor Lucy could not tell. She scarcely knew how long she stood there, and she was so occupied with Katie and the pang of this parting with her, that she did not see another visitor approaching from the town, though he was a very welcome visitor indeed. When she heard his voice coming up the stair, her heart jumped with pleasure. He had not deserted her then, and gone away without seeing her. She turned round and opened the door of the drawing-room in the simplicity of her pleasure.

“ I am so glad to see you,” she said, with fervour ; and Sir Tom came in smiling, with every appearance of being glad to see her too.

“ I thought it best not to come too soon,” Sir Thomas said, “ for your old lady did not like the looks of me, Miss Lucy. Perhaps, I thought, she might like me even worse than my looks ; but this is luck to find you alone.”

“ Oh, but I am always alone,” said Lucy, her countenance falling. “ This is not like Grosvenor Street, Sir Thomas ; most of the time I see no-

body at all ; and when people come they say that I am changed."

"Somebody has been vexing you," said Sir Thomas, with his sympathetic look. "Never mind, no one who really knows you will think you changed ; and I hope you are happy on the whole, among your old friends?"

Lucy shook her head.

"It is not that they are not kind," she said, "they are all very kind—but they will not permit me to think that other people are kind too ; everyone bids me to beware of some one else. You laugh, but I could cry ; and it makes me that I don't know what to do."

"They bid you beware of me? Well, I suppose that was to be expected," Sir Thomas said, with a laugh.

"Oh, not only of you, but of each other ; and Aunt Ford warns me against them all. Well, it is amusing, I suppose," said Lucy, "but it does not amuse me," and the tears came into her eyes.

"My dear little girl ! (I am an uncle, you know), things will mend," said Sir Tom. "Come, tell me what they say of me. Did they say I was an extravagant fool, and had wasted all my

living like the prodigal? Alas! that is true, Lucy. It may be uncharitable to say it, but the ladies are quite right; and if it were not for that excellent plan of the uncle, perhaps, as they tell you, it would be better for you to have nothing to do with me."

"I do not believe that," cried Lucy, almost with vehemence. And then she paused and looked at him anxiously, and, with a crimson colour gradually coming over her face, asked in a low tone, "Sir Thomas, do not be angry, are you *poor*?"

He grew red too, with surprise, but then laughed.

"Well," he said, "yes, for my position I certainly am. When a man has a great house to keep up, and a number of expenses, if he is not rich he must be poor."

"Ah! but I don't think that could be what papa meant," cried Lucy, with a profound sigh.

"I cannot tell, nor what you mean either, my little Lucy," he said. "I feel very much like an uncle to-day, so you must pardon the familiarity; you are so little, and so young, and I am so *flétri*, with crows-feet beyond counting. Lucy, I

have come to bid you good-bye; I am going to Scotland, you know."

"Oh!" said Lucy, her countenance falling. "I hoped—we hoped—you were not going directly. So long as you were near, I felt that there was some one—— Must you really go, Sir Tom?"

Neither of them noticed at the moment the sudden familiarity into which they had fallen, and Lucy's dismay was so candid that it was all Sir Tom could do to keep from a caress, such as would have been very appropriate to his assumed character, but not very consistent with the partial guardianship he had been trusted with.

"It is very sweet of you to be sorry," he said, rising and walking to the window, where he stood looking out for a moment with his back to her, "but I am afraid I must go; at all events, it will be better for me to go. If you want anything very urgently, write to me, or send me a telegram; but I don't suppose you will have any very pressing necessities," he said, turning round with a smile.

"No," said Lucy, very downcast; "oh, it is not that: I have not any necessities, I wish I

had. It is just—it is only—one wants some one to speak to, some one to tell——”

She was so disappointed that there came a little quiver into her lips and quaver in her tone. Had he been right? Was it really true that she was no more in love with him than he was with his old aunt? Sir Thomas was only human, and an amiable vanity was warm in him. A pleasant little thrill of surprise and gratitude went through his heart. Was it perhaps possible?—but Lucy made haste to add :

“ You are the only person that I could tell something to, something that is on my mind. My guardians know, so it is not quite, quite a secret : but no one else knows : and when I go to them they always oppose me—at least, they did everything they could against me the one time ; and I thought if I could tell you, who are a gentleman, and have experience, it would be such a comfort—and perhaps you could guide me in doing what I have to do. Papa did not say I was to tell nobody. I am sure he would have liked me to have some one to stand by me, since you are so kind, Sir Tom.”

“ You may calculate upon me, Miss Lucy.

What is it? or do you want to tell me now, when I am going away?"

His tone was cooled, chilled. Lucy did not quite know how, but she felt it. Almost for the first time since she had known him, Sir Thomas looked at her with no wavering of expression in his face, no twinkle in his eye.

"It will perhaps—be a bore to you," she said, chilled too, and hesitating.

"You learned that word in town," he said, melting, and relaxing into his habitual laugh. "Come, tell me; when I know, then I shall be able to advise, and you will find me infallible. Something your guardians oppose? then I suppose it must be a desire you have to be kind to other people, Lucy. They could not refuse you any little wants of your own."

"How clever you are, Sir Tom!" said Lucy, lighting up, "that is just what it is. Papa left me a great deal of money—I believe it is really a great deal of money—to give away. Perhaps you may have noticed that I have been rude, very rude, in asking if people were—poor."

"You asked *me* so ten minutes ago," he said.

"Oh! you must not think I meant—— Sir

Thomas, papa says in his will, and he has said it to me often—not to waste the money, giving a little here, and a little there, but, when I could find out a fit occasion, to provide for somebody, to put them quite above want.”

“And the thought crossed your sweet little soul,” he said with one of his big laughs, “my dear child! to provide for me.”

“No! Oh no! I never could have been so impertinent, indeed that was not what I meant; only it flashed across me how much better, if I could, to give it to some one I liked, than to some one I knew nothing about and didn’t care for; but then it was not to be people I cared for—only people who were poor.”

“Lucy, do you care for me?”

“Very much, Sir Tom,” she said with a brightness quite unusual to her, turning upon him eyes which met his with perfect frankness and calm. Will it be believed that Sir Thomas was utterly disgusted by this quite candid, affectionate, innocent response?

“Ah! that is precisely what I said,” he muttered to himself, jumping up impatiently from his chair; then he laughed and sat down again.

“Well, well, tell me how I can help you.

This money is to be spent on the deserving poor. In short it is a charitable fund."

"There is nothing about deserving. It is a very great deal of money. It is nearly as much as the half of what I have got. What papa wished was that it should be *given back*."

"The half of what you have got!" Sir Thomas stared at her bewildered, in his mind making a rapid calculation that, with the half of what she had got, Lucy would no longer be the greatest heiress in England. He was not sorry. She would still have a great fortune. Somehow, indeed, it pleased and conciliated him that she should be put down from that high pedestal. This was his only reflection on the subject. "What are you to do? are you to establish institutions, or build hospitals?" he said.

"Oh, no, nothing of that kind; only to provide for those that want, not for the very, very poor, at least not always; but for poor people who are not poor. Do you know what I mean, Sir Thomas? for those who have been well off."

"I understand: like me—poor ladies, and poor gentlemen."

"We were not ladies and gentlemen ourselves.

It is not confined to them," said Lucy doubtfully, "families that are struggling to live, whether they are gentlemen, or whether they are not, clerks like my Uncle Rainy, or schoolmasters like papa. Do you consider it very insulting to offer people money, when you see that they want it very much?"

"Well, that depends," said Sir Thomas, recovering his humorous look, "upon the person who offers, and the person to whom it is offered. It happens so rarely that one has no experience on the subject."

"Do you remember, Sir Thomas, when I borrowed that hundred pounds?" Lucy said. "That was for one, it was my first, my very first. She was very much offended, and then she said she would take it as a loan. I cheated her into it," the girl said with glee, "I told her I could not give any loans, papa never said anything about loans, but she could give it me back if she wished when I am my own mistress in seven years. Don't you think she will forget before that time? It would be rather dreadful to have it back."

"That depends also," he said, "but I think it very likely that she will forget. Only take care,

take care. Presents of a hundred pounds are very pleasant things. You will have crowds of claimants if you don't mind."

"A hundred pounds!" said Lucy, "oh, it was not an insignificant thing like that!"

"You think that insignificant? You have princely notions, it must be allowed. Might one ask—"

"I counted up very closely," Lucy said. She was drawn along by the tide of her own confidences, "for it was no use giving a little bit that would be swallowed up directly, and do no good. You see it was a lady, and ladies are not so expensive as men. In that case, and it was my first, it was six thousand pounds."

"Six thousand pounds!" Sir Thomas sprang to his feet with comical consternation, as if he had been struck by electricity. "My dear little girl," he said half tragically, half laughing, "do you know what you are doing? Are you sure this is in your father's will? and do your guardians allow it! I feel my head going round and round. Six thousand pounds! to some one not related to you, a stranger."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy earnestly, "or it would not be giving it back. My guardians oppose it as much as ever they can."

“And I don’t wonder at it,” cried Sir Thomas. “I think I should oppose it too if I were one of them. My dear little Lucy, you are upsetting the very principles of political economy. Do you know what that means? You will demoralise everybody you come in contact with. Even I, though my instincts are not mendicant, it is all I can do not to hold out my hand for something. I shall be doing it if I stay much longer,” he said.

Lucy looked at him with a dubious, half alarmed look. She never was quite sure whether he was in jest or earnest, and the possibility, even the most distant possibility that he could mean— Even Lucy’s imagination, however, could not go so far as that. He could read her doubt in her face, and laughed out.

“I warn you to take care,” he said. “You will be the ruin of all your friends; but, Lucy, Lucy, this is a very wonderful business, it is like a fairy tale. You gave away six thousand pounds, and were permitted to do so at your age? and you mean to do it again—and again?”

“Oh, as often as ever I can,” Lucy said fervently. “I cannot bear to think how many people may be in want of it, and that I don’t

know them, and don't know how to find them out. This makes me very unhappy when I think of it. Perhaps you will help me to find them—?”

“No, that I cannot promise to do. I warn you I shall be holding out my own hand presently. On the contrary, I will keep people out of your knowledge. You will ruin all our principles,” he said.

“But when it is in the will,” cried Lucy. It is unconceivable how much lighter her heart felt, since she had told him. There was a little flush on her cheeks, and her eyes shone with a pleasant light. She could have gone on talking for hours now that the floodgates were open. It was so easy to talk to Sir Tom. His very laugh was kind, he never found fault, or if he did that was as pleasant as the rest; she had a kind of frank admiration of him, and trust in him, such as some girls feel for an elder brother. The unusual gleam of excitement in her face made the little quiet Lucy pretty and interesting, and Sir Thomas was flattered and piqued at once by the enthusiasm of affectionate faith which was in her eyes. It piqued him, and it pleased him—that he should have all this, and yet no more. He had got a great deal more in his life, and

looked for it, and the absence of it made him a little impatient.

“Well,” he said, “you will go through the world like a good fairy, and I hope the good you will do, will make up for the demoralisation your want of principle will lead to. But before my principles are ruined, Lucy, goodbye, I must go. I have written my address there in your blotting book, and if you want me, or if you want to ask me anything, be sure you do it. Thank you for taking me into your confidence. But now I must go away.”

Lucy got up to say goodbye, but her heart sank. “Oh, must you go?” she said, “I am so sorry. While you were there the place was not quite so lonely. But I hope you will like the shooting very much,” she said with a sigh, and a sense of real self-sacrifice. Her eyes got moist in spite of herself; and Sir Thomas bent over her, and kissed her forehead, or rather her hair, in spite of himself. He ought not to have done it, and he was half ashamed of having done it. “Goodbye, my little Lucy,” he cried. As for Lucy, she took this kiss “sedately” like the poet’s heroine. It seemed so natural, she liked him so much; she was glad he liked her a little too.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW ADVISER.

LUCY was greatly comforted by the visit of Sir Thomas. It made her sad to see him go away, and the consciousness that he was no longer within reach raised for the moment another cloud upon her horizon; but on the whole it was an exhilaration to her to have spoken to him, to have shared her secret with him. She had, as she said, tried to communicate it to Lady Randolph in the early days of their companionship; but it had been so very far from Lady Randolph's thoughts, that Lucy's timid hint had made no impression on her mind. Neither would Sir Thomas have been capable of understanding had she spoken less plainly than she did; but Lucy at last had spoken very plainly—and he

had understood. He had not given her any valuable advice. In such circumstances there is very little advice practicable ; but he had understood, which is such a great matter. She knew no better what to do, how to turn, and how to distribute the money, than she had done at the first ; but yet she was easier in her mind. She had talked it over, and it had done her good. Henceforward she was not alone in her possession of this secret. A secret is a very heavy burden to be borne alone, and, though Lucy had been restrained by many considerations from asking Sir Thomas' advice on the special question which now occupied her mind, she was still consoled. In case of any break-down he would not blame her ; he would give her his sympathy. In case of any difficulty she could write to him, or even summon him to her aid. He liked her, which was a pleasure to think of—liked her as she liked him—though he was so much older, and of so much more importance in the world. All this was of great comfort to Lucy. She began to hold up her head, and to feel herself less abandoned. It was true he had gone away, but that did not matter so much, he would come

back if she wanted his help; and in the meanwhile time was going, floating on noiselessly and swiftly, and by and by the Farafeld chapter would be over. Mrs. Ford, who had watched for Sir Tom's departure very jealously, and who had bounced out of the parlour to see him go away, and detected a little redness about Lucy's eyes, was re-assured by hearing her hum little tunes to herself in the latter part of the day, and talk to Jock with great animation about his new tutor, and all that was going to happen.

"She didn't mind after all," Mrs. Ford said, "how should she, a man old enough to be her father." And thus everybody was pleased.

In the afternoon Katie Russell came in, all tearful and penitent, to beg Lucy's pardon, and declare that "it was all me." The pardon was accorded with great willingness and satisfaction, and Katie stayed and chattered, and made a lasting peace. She offended Lucy's taste no longer; or else Lucy awoke to the fact that her friend was never entirely to her taste, and that toleration is the most essential of all qualities to friendship. Katie remained to tea. She told Jock a quite new story, which he had never heard

before, and could not parallel out of his books; and she beguiled Lucy back into the old world of careless youth. Lucy's youth had never been so thoughtless or so merry as that of many of her comrades. Even Katie, though she had known so many of the drawbacks of life, had on the other hand got a great deal more pleasure out of it than the heiress had ever known. Sometimes the pleasures and the pains go together, and it is a question whether those are best off who hold the middle way between, and have not much of either. Katie was a more lively companion than Lucy, with her serious upbringing, her sense of responsibility, and those cares which had been put so prematurely upon her young head, could ever have been. The pink drawing-room, for the first time, became mirthful, and light voices and laughter disturbed the quiet. "Just listen," Mrs. Ford said, "Sir Thomas, for all such a great man as you think him, has not made much impression there." Her husband, who had a very high opinion of the influence of Sir Thomas, uttered a "humph" of protestation from where he sat in his easy-chair by the fireplace. The grate full of shavings was not so

pleasant as the grate with a good fire in it was in winter; but it was Ford's place at all seasons. He said nothing but humph! having nothing to add to bolster up his opinion. But it would have been as surprising to him as to his wife had they known that it was he who was in the right, and that even Lucy's laugh, her easier mind, her more cheerful face, owed something to the cheerful presence of Sir Tom, even though he had gone away.

At tea they were joined by another and unexpected visitor, at the sight of whom Mrs. Ford threw up her hands. "Philip!" she cried. "I thought you were abroad. How glad I am to see you! Dear, dear, how little one knows! I was thinking this very afternoon, when I saw a picture of the snowy mountains—there now, Philip's about there."

"I have come back," said Philip, "I was abroad all last month, but a great many things seemed to call me home. There is a bit to be built on at Kent's Lane. And there was Lucy. Oh, how do you do? You *are* here! I thought," he said with frankness which Mrs. Ford thought excessive, "that I must come back if Lucy was here."

"I shall be here for six months," said Lucy calmly. "I am very glad to see you, Cousin Philip, but it is a pity you should have come back for me."

"I don't regret it," said the young man; he did not resemble any of the others whom Lucy knew. He was not like St. Clair, nor yet Raymond Rushton, who though the one was fat, and the other awkward, had still a certain naturalness and ease, as if they belonged to the position in which they were. Philip was a great deal more carefully adapted to his position in every respect than they were. He had just the clothes which a man in the country in the month of August ought to wear, and he had been absent, spending the first part of his holidays "abroad," as most men in August would like to be. He had all the cleanness and neatness and trimness which are characteristic of a well-bred Englishman. He was not fine; there was no superfluous glitter about him, not a link too much to his watch-chain, not an unnecessary button. In the very best taste! the only thing against him was that his appearance was too complete. He had the air of being respectful of his clothes, and very

conscious of them. And he was always on his good behaviour, very careful to commit no solecism, to do exactly what it was right to do. He came in with his hat in his hand, and clung to it, though all the time it was apparent in his countenance that he would much rather have left in the hall. It was in such matters that Philip Rainy betrayed himself, for in his heart he felt that it would also have been much more sensible had he hung up his hat, and not encumbered himself with the care of it. He sat down on the haircloth sofa, not approaching his chair to the table round which all the others were seated. He had been brought up upon bread and butter, and was very well accustomed to the homely tea-table; but he felt he owed it to himself to keep up a position of independence, inferring the superior dignity of a late dinner even in vacation time, and a soul above tea.

“Nothing to eat?” said Ford. “I think you’re wrong, Philip; here is toast, and there are some nice slices of cold beef; and there’s cake, but there’s no substance in cake. It is good enough for girls, who live upon nothing, but a man, except to finish off with, wants something more

solid. Have a bit of cold beef, that's what I'm taking myself."

"Let him alone," said Mrs. Ford, "he don't want to spoil his dinner. I hope you haven't come home on some wild-goose chase or other, Philip. I hope you have a better reason than just to see Lucy; but, anyhow, you're welcome. Lucy has been home only a few days, and she's not spoiled, nor much changed, though she might be. I cannot say that I think she's much changed."

"Lucy is not one to change," the young man said; and he looked at her with an affectionate smile; but somehow, in the very act of going to her, this look was arrested by the little saucy face of Katie Russell, a face which was brighter and more mischievous, but not half so strong in moral beauty as that of Lucy. She caught him, looking at him as the most timid of young girls may look at a stranger, when under the care of a most decorous roof and a matron's ample wings. The young man actually swerved a little aside, and stopped dead short in what he was saying. It was as if some one had given him a blow.

"I forgot to introduce you to Miss Russell," said Mrs. Ford, catching the look, but not understanding it. "A cousin of ours, Mr. Rainy, Miss Russell. No, you are right about Lucy; but she has a great many temptations. There are folks about her that have their own ends to serve. She is one that many a person envies; but I, for one, don't envy Lucy. I tell her sometimes I wonder how many of her fine friends would stand by her—My Lady This, and Mrs. That—if she were to lose her money; *that's* what they're after. And she's too trusting, the thing for her would be to keep herself to herself."

"Indeed," cried Katie Russell, with sparkling eyes, "it is very cruel and unkind of you to say so. Lucy knows very well *we* don't love her for her money. What do I care for her money? I was fond of Lucy before I knew what money meant, and so I would be fond of her," cried the girl, with a flush of passion, "if it were all tossed into the sea:—and all my people," she added, after a moment, "as well as me."

Lucy had followed this little outburst with pleasure in her mild eyes, but the last words gave her a shock, as of the real penetrating

into the poetical. Her mind was not quick enough to jump at the subtle mixture of semi-truth and semi-falsehood in it, but she felt, though she could not define. There was the bitterest kind of humour in the suggestion, but Katie, perhaps, did not know, and certainly did not, at the moment, mean anything different from what she said.

"Susan," said Ford, with a nod to Philip, "wasn't meaning anybody in particular. There is no occasion, Miss Russell, to take offence. Mrs. Ford was meaning—other persons that shall be nameless," Ford added, with a wave of his hand.

"They are all wrong, Philip," said Lucy. "I wish so very much people would not speak so. It takes all the pleasure out of my life. Lady Randolph never talked about my money, never warned me against anyone. Please don't do it, Aunt Ford!"

"I know," said Mrs. Ford, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "I've seen it from the very first in your face, Lucy. I'm not a fine lady, like your Lady Randolph, I can't put a smooth face on everything, and let you go sailing over

a precipice as if it were nothing to me. I am only one that speaks out plain what is in my mind, and one that has known you from your cradle, and have no ends of my own, but your interest at heart. But to be plain and true's not enough for you any longer. I've known it all this time, I've seen it in your face: but I didn't think you would put it into words, and before strangers, and me Lucilla Rainy's cousin, and one that has known you from your cradle, and nursed your father on his death-bed; oh, I never thought you could have the heart to put it into words!"

"Have I said anything wrong?" said Lucy, in great distress. She was bewildered by the sudden attack, and horrified by the scene "before strangers;" for Lucy had all the instincts of respectability, and to see Mrs. Ford's tears filled her with pain and involuntary compunction; but she was not so emotional as to lose her sense of justice. "I did not mean to say anything wrong," she repeated, anxiously. Mrs. Ford's tears were a little slow in coming; she sniffed, and she held her handkerchief to her face, which was red with anger and excitement, but she did

not possess, at any time, a great command over tears.

Then Philip took up the part of peace-maker.

“You said yourself, two minutes ago, that Lucy was not changed,” he said. “Because you think she should be on her guard, you don’t want her to be unhappy? and if she does not like her friends, how can she be happy, Mrs. Ford? so good a friend as you are must know that. To be sure,” said Philip, “we of the Rainy family can’t help being a little anxious and fussy about our heiress, can we? We think more of her than other people can, and care more for her.”

“That is the truth, that is the very truth,” cried Mrs. Ford. And thus the incident blew over in professions that Lucy’s interest and happiness were all she thought of, on one side, and on the other, that she meant to say nothing which could hurt Mrs. Ford’s feelings.

Philip went upstairs with the girls after this, into the pink drawing-room, where he sat all the evening, forgetting his dinner. He had come to see Lucy, but it was Katie Russell who took the conversation in hand; and as he was a very

staid young man, not used to the lighter graces of conversation, Katie's chatter, and the perpetual variations of her pretty face, were a sort of revelation to Philip. He was entirely carried beyond himself and all his purposes by this new being. Lucy sat tranquilly in her corner and assisted, but did little more. She was amused to see her grave cousin laughed at and subdued, and the evening flew over them, as evenings rarely fly, in more edifying intercourse. The talk and the laughter were at their height when Katie, going to the piano to sing "just one more song," suddenly discovered that it was too dark to see her music, and stopped short with a cry of dismay, "Why, it is dark! and I never noticed —— What will Mrs. Stone think? I came over only for half an hour, and I am staying all the night. Lucy, goodbye, I must go now.

"But you have promised me this song," Philip said, "there are candles to be had."

"And you are not going to run away like that. Jock and I will go home with you," said Lucy, "and, perhaps, Philip will come too."

Philip thanked his cousin with his eyes, and the song was sung; and then the little party got

under weigh. It was a warm still night, with a little autumnal mist softening all the edges of the horizon, and mild stars shining through with a kind yet pensive softness. Philip Rainy had been admirable in all the relations of life. He had done his duty by his parents, by his scholars, and by himself; he had combined a prudent sense of his own interests with justice to everybody, and kindness to those who had a claim upon him; and the life which lay behind him was one on which any well-regulated young man might have looked back with pleasure. But all at once it seemed to the young schoolmaster that it was the dreariest of desert tracks, and that up to this moment he had never lived at all. He had never understood before what the balmy atmosphere of a summer night meant, or how it was that the stars got soft, and came to bear a personal relation to the eyes that looked at them. What did it mean? He had come to see Lucy; but he barely perceived Lucy. All the world, and all his interests seemed suddenly concentrated into the little circle in which that one little figure was standing. He stood beside her, drawn to her by a soft inexplain-

able influence. He walked beside her as in a dream ; everything was sweet, the night air that lifted her bright hair and tossed it about her forehead ; the gorse-bush that clung to her dress, and had to be disengaged, every prickle giving him another delicious prick as he pulled them away. Whether he was dreaming, or whether he had gone clean out of his senses, or whether this was a new life of which he had never been conscious before, Philip did not know. When they arrived at the White House, which they did not do by honest straightforward means, along the plain road that led to it, but by a quite unnecessary roundabout, an excursion led by Jock through all the narrowest byeways, a sudden stop seemed to be put to this chapter of existence. He had a hand put into his for one second, a succession of merry nods, and farewells waved by the same hand, and then he stood with Lucy, come to himself, outside a blank door, a dropped curtain, a sudden conclusion. Philip stood gazing, he did not seem to have any energy even to turn round. Had it been suggested to him to lie down there and spend the night, he would have thought the suggestion

most reasonable. Had he been alone, he would, no doubt, have lingered, for some time at least. Even as it was, he never knew how long a time, a minute, or an hour, or perhaps only an infinitesimal moment, too small to be reckoned on any watch, elapsed, before, slowly coming to himself with the giddiness of a fall, he saw that he was with Lucy, and that she was turning to go home. Jock was roaming on in advance, a little moving solid speck in the vague dark, and Lucy moved on, softly and lightly indeed, but with no enchantment about her steps. And then what she said was all of the old world, the antiquated dried up Sahara of existence from which Philip had escaped for the first time in his life.

“It looks a little like rain,” Lucy said, “it is a good thing we are not far from home.”

“Ah! but it does not so much matter now,” Philip said with a sigh. “She would have spoilt her pretty dress.”

“Yes! muslins go at once,” said Lucy, “it is the starch. I didn’t think it would rain when we came out. But we must not grumble—we have had a beautiful summer. Does Farafeld

seem just the same to you, Philip, when you come home."

"Farafield! I never saw anything so sweet—the air is softer than I ever felt it in my life; and the Common smells—like Paradise," cried the young man in the sudden bewilderment which had come upon him, which he did not understand.

"Do you think so?" said Lucy in great surprise; especially the last point was doubtful; but she thought it was the warmth of local enthusiasm, and blamed herself for her want of patriotism. "I like it very well," she added with hesitation, "but—*after* one has been away the first time, then one sees all the difference. I don't suppose I should feel the same again."

Then there was a pause. Philip did not feel inclined to talk; his mind was quite abstracted out of its ordinary channel. As they went back, he felt within himself a dual consciousness—he was walking with *her*, helping her over the stones, disengaging her dress from the prickles; and at the same time he was walking demurely with Lucy, who required no such services. The sensible young schoolmaster, had the question

been suddenly put to him, could not, at the moment, have distinguished which was true.

But Lucy, curiously enough, was seized with an inclination to open her mind to her cousin. She had come back to her natural condition, through the help of Sir Tom and Katie, and she wanted to be friendly. She said, "I am so glad that you have come home, Philip. You know—so much more than Aunt Ford knows. Perhaps if you will tell her that everybody is not thinking of my money—that it is not half so important as she thinks, she will believe you."

"Your money!" Philip said with a gasp—suddenly the stars disappeared out of the sky. The summer evening became less balmy. There was a moment of rapid gyration, either of the whole round world itself, or of his head, he could not tell which. And he felt himself strike sharply with his foot upon a stone in the path, and came to earth and to common life again, limping and rubbing his ancle. "Confound it!" he said under his breath; but, perhaps, it was his good angel put that stone in his way. He came wholly and entirely to himself under the stimulant of that salutary pain.

"I hope you have not hurt yourself," said Lucy, with her usual calm.

"Oh! it is nothing," said Philip, ashamed, "The fact is I came home sooner than I intended, thinking—that, perhaps, you might want some advice. For instance," he said, grasping at the first idea which occurred to him, a sort of staff of the practical in this chaos of the vague and unknown where he had suddenly found himself stumbling, "about Jock—he is in my way—I might help you about Jock."

"Oh!" said Lucy with animation, "thank you, Philip, that is all arranged. I have got the most delightful plan settled. Mrs. Stone's nephew, a poor gentleman who is in bad health: just when he was about succeeding so finely at the bar—and it is a great thing to succeed at the bar, isn't it? his health gave way: and he is so good as to be willing to come and teach Jock. I think it is so very kind."

"Kind!" said Philip at last, thoroughly woke up. He opened his eyes wide and shook himself instinctively. This was what Mrs. Ford meant, and no wonder if she made a scene. "This is a strange step to take, Lucy," he said

seriously. "I don't know what it means. I should think as a relative, and your father's successor, and—engaged in tuition" (nature had brought the word [schoolmaster to his lips, but unless you belong to the higher branches of the profession, you do not like to call yourself a schoolmaster), "that I had the first claim."

Lucy was greatly distressed. She had never considered the question before in this light. "Oh, Philip! I am so sorry. So you should have had—if I had ever thought! I beg your pardon a thousand times. But then," she added, recovering her composure, "you have a great many boys—it does not matter to you; and this poor gentleman—"

"Poor gentlemen ought not to come to you," said Philip with indignation. "A barrister, a man in bad health—what was he to do with a small boy? Jock ought to have come to me. I proposed it before you went to London, it is the best thing for him. I think—that your father meant him to be my successor in Kent's Lane."

"Oh, no, no! never that," said Lucy.

"Is it so much beneath Jock?" Philip said,

with a touch of natural bitterness. "But anyhow, it is I that ought to have the charge of him. I do not want to be unkind, Lucy; but I think I begin to see what Mrs. Ford means about your family."

"Philip!" cried Lucy indignant, and then she added, almost crying, "you are all so unjust; and if you say so too, what am I to do?"

"I will not say anything; but it is what I cannot help thinking," said Philip with the stateliness of offence. It seemed to him, he could scarcely tell how, that he was being defrauded, not of Jock, who was a trifle, but of all share or interest in Lucy's future. He had come back, on purpose to look after her, to keep her out of trouble. While he had been away, it had been more and more clear to him that to share Lucy's fortune was in a manner his right. It would save him, at least, ten years; it would secure his position at once—and he had a right. He had come to the Terrace that evening full of this idea; and he had played the fool—he could not but allow that he had played the fool. What were poetry and the stars and the mild influences of the Pleiades to him? He was a

Rainy, and there was no one who had so much right to share the great Rainy fortune. The energy of opposition awoke him, which nothing else, perhaps, could have done. "You will forgive me," he said, "but you are only a young girl, and you cannot be expected to understand. And it is quite true what Aunt Ford said, there are always a herd of harpies after a girl with a large fortune. You should take the advice of those who belong to you. You should first consult your true friends."

Lucy was confounded, she did not know how to reply. Was not Sir Thomas her true friend? He had not been angry with her when she told him about that famous scheme for giving the money back. Some floating idea that Philip would have been able to help her in that respect, that he might have suggested what, for instance, she should give to St. Clair, had been in her mind. But Lucy promptly shut up her impulse of confession. She withdrew a little from his side. He was not ignorant like the Fords—he was a kind of natural adviser. "But what is the use of speaking to anyone who does not understand?" Lucy said. So they traversed the rest

of the way in silence, Philip occasionally making a severe remark in the same vein, yet feeling, as he did so, that every word he said was a sacrifice of his vantage ground. He wanted to change his tactics, when he saw the evident mistake of strategy he had made. But such matters are not within our own control; when a false key is struck, it is not easy to get free of it. Philip was ready to curse himself for his folly; but at the same time his folly and his wrong key-note, and the misadventure of the evening altogether gave him a sense of almost aversion to his cousin. "What a contrast!" he said to himself. Thus Lucy, whose simplicity was captivating to such a man of the world as Sir Tom, made the Farafeld schoolmaster indignant and impatient beyond measure. Sir Thomas would have been in no sort of danger from little Katie. Thus the world goes on, without any regard to the suitable, or possible. They said "goodnight" very coolly to each other, and Lucy ran upstairs vexed and troubled—for to be disapproved of wounded her. As for Mrs. Ford, she came out of the parlour, where she now seemed to lie in wait for occurrences,

when she heard them come to the door. "Come soon again, Philip," she whispered, "there's a good lad. I think the whole town is after her. You are the one that ought to get it all. You will be kindly welcome if you come every day."

"I have not a notion what it is you want me to get," said Philip crossly as he strode away.

CHAPTER III.

VISITORS.

THE day on which these events occurred was the day of Mr. Frank St. Clair's arrival at the White House, where he had come dutifully in answer to his aunt's summons, to hear of "something to his advantage." To do him justice, he was by no means delighted with the project; but he was dutiful and needy, and there was nothing for it but to submit. He went the next morning to pay his respects to the heiress, and assume the charge of his pupil. It was not a long walk from the White House, but Mr. Frank St. Clair was warm when he arrived, being, according to the euphemism of the day, "out of training," and glad to sit down and contemplate the little fellow who was to be the in-

strument of his fortune. Jock, who had resumed his position on the white rug, and lay there, cool and at his ease, while Lucy dutifully read her history, was by no means inclined to submit to any examination.

“Come and tell me what you can do, my little man,” Mr. St. Clair said; “let us see which of us knows the most; we are going to teach other—you me, or I you. Come and let’s make out which it is to be.”

Jock raised his head from the rug, and looked at his questioner with big eyes. The inspection did not seem to please him. “I know a lot,” he said, concisely, and dropped his head; his book was more interesting than the stranger. It was “Don Quixote” with pictures which he had in his hands, this deeply experienced reader had never encountered the work with these attractions before.

“I told you, Miss Trevor,” said St. Clair, “he sees through me, he knows my learning is antiquated. If a man has the misfortune to live before Madvig what is he to do? Scholarship is the most progressive of all sciences; which is curious, considering that it is with dead languages it has to do.”

Lucy raised her mild eyes with no understanding in them. It was in vain to speak of dead languages to her. "Though he is so little," she said, apologetically, "he has read a great many books. That is what he means; but he has had no education, Mr. St. Clair, except just a little at Hampstead. He has done nothing but read books—nonsense books," said Lucy, severely, thinking to reach the culprit, "that could not teach him anything or do him any good."

"Reading books is on the whole not a bad kind of education," said St. Clair. "I see you pursue that way yourself."

"Oh—but this is history: it is not in the least amusing, sometimes it is very hard, I can't remember it a bit: and sometimes I almost go to sleep; very different," said Lucy, pointedly, "from the books that Jock reads; they make him laugh, they make him so interested that he can't bear anyone to speak to him. He won't go to bed, he won't play for them. *That* cannot be education at all."

"Very true," Mr. St. Clair said. "Medicine must be nasty. Might one know, my friend, what you are reading now?"

Jock raised himself from the rug once more. He did not lose a word either of the book or the conversation. "I've read it before; but this time I've just come to the windmills," he said.

"The windmills? now what may they be?"

"I told you," said Lucy regretfully; "they are all nonsense books—nothing that is of any good."

"Because you don't know," cried Jock, hotly. "You've no business to speak when you don't know. *He* doesn't think they're windmills; he thinks they're big giants, and they're just like it, just like giants—I've thought so myself. He thinks they've got a lot of poor people carrying them off to be slaves, and there's only *him* upon his own horse—nobody more; but do you think he'll let them carry off the poor people for slaves? He goes at them like a dozen knights—he goes at them like an army," cried Jock, his eyes flashing. "I wish I had been there, I'd have done it too."

"Ah, Don Quixote," said St. Clair. "What you, Jock! you that know such a lot, you'd have gone at the windmills too?"

Jock grew red, for he did not like ridicule

“He didn’t know they were windmills,” he said.

“Didn’t I tell you, Mr. St. Clair,” said Lucy; “that is all he thinks about—windmills! what good can windmills do him? unless he were to learn all about the uses of them, and who began them, and the good they are to the country; that would be very different from a fairy tale.”

“It is not a bit a fairy tale,” Jock cried, indignant. “It’s a long time since I read any fairy tales—never any since Prospero and Ariel on the enchanted island. This is about a man. Fairy tales are very nice when you are quite little,” he added, with dignity, “just beginning to read plain; but when you are bigger you like sense best, for you can think I would do the same.”

“You see, Mr. St. Clair, that is just like him: it is not education,” said Lucy, with mild despair.

“I am not quite clear about that,” said St. Clair, who knew a little more than Lucy; “but, Jock, you will find a great many more books to read, and men to hear about, if you come to me and learn. Leave your tall gentleman to overcome the windmills, and come and speak to me. Tell me what you have

learnt," he said, holding the child within his arm as he stood up, reluctantly, by his side. Lucy looked on with pleased approval, yet many excuses. "He has never been to school, he was so delicate, papa didn't like him to be out of his sight," she said, reddening with much shame and self-reproach, as the real state of the case was elucidated. When the cross-examination was over, Jock, though not at all ashamed, escaped as quickly as he could from Mr. St. Clair's detaining arm. He snatched up his book from the rug, and made assurance sure by putting a flight of stairs and the closed door of Mrs. Ford's room between him and the inquisitor, who laughed and shook his head as the little fellow bolted. "We must begin from the beginning, I fear ;" he said. "He has been neglected ; but after all there has not been much time lost."

"I am very sorry he is so ignorant," said Lucy, deprecating ; "but, Mr. St. Clair, papa was old, and I was very young."

"Yes, no one could expect you to think of it ; you are very young now, Miss Trevor, to have such a charge."

"Oh, that is nothing," Lucy said ; "many

people have had a great deal more to do. I have heard of girls that have had to work for their brothers and sisters, indeed I have been acquainted with some," she said, thinking of Mary Russell. "But, now that we know of it, it is not too late to mend it, Mr. St. Clair.

"Not at all too late," he was pleased that she should say we. Such a familiarity of association was all he thought that could be desired. "I will undertake to put him in the right way—for the moment."

"Oh!" Lucy said, with disturbed looks, "will it be only for the moment, Mr. St. Clair? I know it is very good fortune, far more than we could have expected, to get you at all—and that you should take such a very little boy."

"I am very happy to be able to be of any use to you," St. Clair said, with a smile, "and if I am not called away—But you well understand that I cannot be at all sure of my time, Miss Trevor. I may be called away."

St. Clair was ready to laugh at the little formula, and this gave him an additional air of seriousness, which looked like feeling. "I wish I had done nothing in my life to be so little

ashamed of," he [added, "as teaching a small boy."

Lucy looked at him with great respect, and even a little awe. An innocent girl has a certain awe of a man so much older than herself, so much more experienced in every way, who perhaps has had mysterious wrong-doings in his life as well as other things, more momentous and terrible than any her imagination has ever realized. The things that St. Clair might have to be ashamed of loomed large upon her in the darkness of her ignorance, like gigantic shadows, upon which she looked with pity and a little horror, yet at the same time an awful respect. "Mrs. Stone told me," she said, with her serious face, "that you had not been well, that, after all your studies and work, you had not been well enough—I am very, very sorry. It must have been a great disappointment."

"That is exactly what it was ; it is very sweet to meet with some one who understands," St. Clair said ; "yes, it is not so much for myself, but they had all done so much for me, all believed in me so."

“But, Mr. St. Clair, with rest and taking care, will it not all come right?”

“They say so,” he said; “but, Miss Trevor, though you don’t know much of the hardships of life, you will understand that this is exactly what it is most hard to do. To rest implies means and leisure, and I ought to be working night and day.”

“I am very, very sorry,” said Lucy; a great many waves of varying resolution were passing over her mind—what could she do? would it be most polite to take no notice, to receive such a confidence as if it was nothing to her? or should she be bold and put forth her powers as a helper, a wrong-redresser? Jock’s story about the wind-mills had seemed very great nonsense to his unlettered sister, yet practically she was in a strait not dissimilar. She put her lance in rest with a very doubtful and unassured hand; but if they were giants, as they seemed, she too felt, like the great Spaniard, that to pass them by would be cowardly. She looked at him wistfully, faltering. “You will think it strange of me to say it,” she said, her serious face gradually crimsoning from chin to forehead; “but perhaps you

know—that I am—not the same as other girls ; if there were anything that I could do—”

St. Clair grew red, too, with surprise and mortification : what could the girl mean ? he asked himself ; but he answered suavely, “I am sure you are a great deal better and kinder than most girls—or men either, Miss Trevor. You have the divine gift of sympathy, which always does one good.”

“I don’t know if it is sympathy, Mr. St. Clair. Papa left me a great many directions. He said there were some things I was to try to do ; and if it would be good for you to have leisure, and be able to rest for a year or two—”

St. Clair was reduced to the level of Raymond Rushton by the utter confusion which these words seemed to bring into the very atmosphere.

“Oh, by Jove!” he ejaculated faintly, in his dismay. He rose up hurriedly. She would offer him money, he felt, if he gave her another moment to do it, and though he was very willing and desirous, if he could, to get possession of her money as a whole, to have a little of it thus offered to him seemed the last indignity. “I expect to find Jock a very amusing pupil,” he

said, "not at all like the average little boy. He shall give me a lesson in literature, when I have given him his Latin. I suspect it is I who will profit the most. The little wretch seems to have read everything; I wonder if you have shared his studies. He must have got the taste from some one, it is not generally innate in small boys."

"Oh, no," said Lucy, "not I." She was disappointed to have the subject changed so rapidly, and abandoned it with great reluctance, still looking at him to know why he should so cut her short. "Jock does not think much of me," she added, "and all those story-books, and plays, and poetry, cannot be good for him, surely. Papa never minded; he was old, and Jock seemed such a baby, it did not seem to matter what he did; it was not his fault."

"Oh, I don't think it was anybody's fault. But you are reading, I see, in a steadier way. What is it? history?" Mr. St. Clair approached her table where she was sitting and looked at Lucy's book.

"Yes," she said, with a soft little sigh. "Lady Randolph thought I ought; and I should be

thinking of my French. It is so hard when one is not clever. I must ask Mrs. Stone to let me go to Mademoiselle when she comes back."

"And may I help you with this?" Mr. St. Clair said. He drew a chair near her and sat down.

It had not occurred to good Mrs. Ford that any precautions were necessary, or that she should break up her mornings by being present during all the talk of the young people. If a girl had to be watched for ever, Mrs. Ford thought, she must be a very poor sort of girl; so that Lucy's pink drawing-room was practically open to the world, as entirely open as if she had been an American young lady, with a salon and visiting list of her own. She was very grateful to Mr. St. Clair when he sat down beside her. It was so kind. He took up the book, and asked her if she had seen this and that, other books more readable than the dry compendium Lucy was studying.

"If you will let me get them for you, it will give me the greatest pleasure," St. Clair said. "I consider history my great subject. I should like to help you, if you will let me." Lucy

accepted his offer with the greatest gratitude. She had found it very dry work by herself.

This was the scene upon which Raymond Rushton came in, very slowly, crushing his hat in his hands. His mother had prevented him from signifying the hour of his visit, with a natural fear of the precautions which Mrs. Stone would certainly have taken to occupy the ground beforehand; but this prudence, as it happened, did him no good. Raymond, to tell the truth, was as much relieved as he was annoyed by St. Clair's presence. He had felt himself grow red and grow pale, hot and cold, all the way, as he came along the street, wondering how he was to manage to make himself agreeable as his mother had ordered him. The very fact that he was commanded to make himself agreeable, hindered any natural effort he might have been capable of. He did not know how to talk to Lucy. Some girls saved you the trouble of talking, but she was not one of those girls, and he did not know how he was to manage to get upon such easy terms with her as would make flirtation possible—even if he had

known how to flirt, which he did not—at least with Lucy. So, though he was so far sensible of the importance of the pursuit as to be slightly angry and alarmed by St. Clair's presence, he was still more relieved, on the whole, to feel that he was thus protected, and that there would not be so much required of him. He came in, looking very much embarrassed, crushing his hat between his hands.

“How d’ye do, Miss Trevor?” he said. “My mother thought I ought to come and see about our ride. We have fixed Thursday for the picnic, but don’t you think we might go out tomorrow to see how the horses go together? Mine,” said Raymond, with a blush, “is rather an old screw.”

“I should like to go—whenever you like. I am very fond of it,” said Lucy. “Jock and I thought of going a little way this evening, but only a little way.”

This put Raymond more and more out.

“I am afraid I can’t get my horse to-day. It is too late now to arrange it.”

“Do you get your horses from the ‘Black Bull?’” said St. Clair. “It must be difficult to

make sure of any thing there. I go to the 'Cross Keys,' where you are much better served. The 'Black Bull,'” he added, in an explanatory tone, “is the place where you get your flies, Miss Trevor. When the fine weather comes, and a great many people are driving about, all their horses are put into requisition.”

“Oh, not quite so bad as that,” cried Raymond, reddening, “you don’t suppose I ride a fly-horse.”

“I know I have done it,” St. Clair said, “when one has not a horse of one’s own, one has to be content with what one can get; but to feel that you are upon a noble steed, which made his last appearance, perhaps, between the shafts of a hearse——”

“Oh, hold hard!” Raymond cried; he was sadly humiliated by the suggestion, and he now began to feel that the presence of this intruder made his visit of very little use indeed, “you must not take all that for gospel, Miss Trevor. A joke is a joke, but a man may go too far in joking.”

“Which is more than you are likely to do on old Fryer’s horses,” St. Clair said, laughing.

But then he got up, feeling that he had made an end of his young rival. He was bigger, broader, altogether more imposing than Raymond. He stood up, and expanded his large proportions, feeling that anybody with half an eye must see the difference—which, perhaps, on the whole, was an unwise step; for St. Clair was too much developed for a young man, and the merest suspicion of fatness, is not that a capital crime in a girl's eyes? On the whole, when they stood up together, Raymond's slim youthfulness carried the day; but there are no delusions so obstinate as those which concern our own personal appearance, and it was with a smile of conscious triumph that the larger young man spread himself out. As for Raymond, he too felt outdone, and withdrew a little from the competition.

“Emmie has got her pony,” he said. “My mother thinks it will do her a great deal of good to see how you ride, Miss Trevor.”

“Oh! but I never was considered to ride very well,” Lucy said.

“We think down here that whatever you do is done well,” said St. Clair, taking the very words out of Raymond's mouth, with this diffe-

rence, that Ray would have uttered them seriously, and would have broke down, whereas *that* fellow made a joke of it, and carried off the compliment with a laugh. "We are not much used to accomplished young ladies from town down here," St. Clair added, "and whatever you do is a wonder to us. 'When you speak we'd have you do so ever—when you sing, we'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms—'"

From this it will be seen that Mr. Frank St. Clair was possessed of some of the graces of letters. But the young persons on either side of him opened their eyes. Ray had a suspicion that there was some sort of play-acting in it; but Lucy was simply amazed that anyone should speak of her singing when she could not sing at all.

"Indeed," she said seriously, "I do not know a note. I never had a voice, and what was the use of having lessons?" which simple answer, though it made him laugh, entirely disconcerted St. Clair and reduced him almost to the level of Raymond, who had now got one hand into his pocket, and felt more comfortable and at his ease. It was thus that Ray was left master of

the field, somewhat to his own surprise ; but at the same time much to his gratification too.

“ I say, what a queer fellow that is,” Raymond said, “ we all want to know about him. If he’s a barrister, as they say, why isn’t he at his chambers, or on circuit, or something? To be sure it’s the ‘ Long ’ just now ; but he seems to be always here.”

“ He has overworked himself, he is not able to do anything,” said Lucy with great sympathy, looking out from the window with a grave face as he went out through the big gateway and crossed the road. When he had reached the edge of the Common, he looked back, and seeing her, took off his hat. It gave St. Clair a glow of gratification to see Lucy looking after him. He went on with a lighter step, and, if possible, a broader chest than ever.

“ By Jove ! isn’t he fat ? ” said Raymond by Lucy’s side ; and Lucy, full of sympathy as she was, could not help remarking the breadth of shadow which moved with him across the sunshine. She laughed in spite of herself. The observation was not witty, but Raymond was put into such high spirits by the laugh he elicited

that he burst forth into scintillations of still more unquestionable wit. "That is because they pet him so at Mrs. Stone's. Ladies always do pet one. I should like to know where he'd find a fly horse up to his weight. Let us ask him to the picnic, Miss Trevor; and borrow a beast for him from the brewer. One elephant upon another," said Ray.

But Lucy's amusement did not last through so long an address. She ended by a sigh, looking after him sympathetically. "I wish one could do everything one wished," she said.

"Ah!" Raymond echoed with a sigh. "But you can, I should think, pretty near. I wish I could do any one thing I wished," the young man added ruefully.

"And that is just my case too," Lucy said.

CHAPTER IV.

A CROQUET PARTY.

THE Rushtons lived in a big old red brick house, close to the town-hall in what was still called the market-place of Farafield, though all the meaner hubbub of the market had long ago been banished to the square behind with its appropriate buildings. It was a house of the time of Queen Anne, with rows of glittering windows, surmounted by a pediment, and, though it was in the centre of the town, a fine old walled garden behind. To Lucy this garden seemed the brightest place imaginable, when she was led into it through the shady passages of the old house, the thick walls and rambling arrangement of which defended it from the blazing of the August skies which penetrated with pitiless heat and glare the naked walls of the Terrace, built

without any consideration of atmospheric changes. Mrs. Rushton's drawing-room was green and cool, all the venetian blinds carefully closed on one side, and on the other, looking out upon the trees and shady lawn where two or three young people, girls in light dresses and young men scarcely less summer-like in costume, were playing croquet. These were the days when croquet still reigned on all lawns and country places, and nobody had as yet discovered that it was "slow." The party was of the usual orthodox kind. There was a young, a very young curate in a long black coat and wide-awake, and a second young man in light clothes with his hands in his pockets, whom Lucy's inexperienced eyes with difficulty distinguished from Raymond Rushton; and two or three girls, one of them the daughter of the house, Emma, a shy hoyden of sixteen. All these young people looked with great curiosity at Lucy as she followed Mrs. Rushton out of the house in her black frock, Jock clinging closely to her. Jock, though he had a great deal of self-possession on ordinary occasions, was shy in such an unusual emergency as this. He had never been at a

garden-party, he was not used to society, and he did not know how to play croquet, in all which points Lucy was almost as uninstructed as he. There was a tea-table set out under an old mulberry tree, with garden chairs and rugs spread out upon the grass. Nothing could be more pleasant, cool, leisurely, and comfortable. It was indeed a scene such as might be seen on a summer afternoon in almost every garden with a good sized house attached to it, with a lawn and a mulberry tree, throughout England. But then Lucy was not much acquainted with such places, and to her everything was new. They all stood and looked at her as she followed Mrs. Rushton across the grass—looked at her with inward sighs and wonderings. To think she should be so rich, while none of the others had anything to speak of. It did not perhaps go so far as actual envy; but it was certainly surprise, and a bewildered question why such good fortune should have fallen to an inconsiderable girl, and not at all to the others who might have been supposed able to make so much more use of it. The young men could not help feeling that the enjoyment which they could have extracted out

of so much money would have been far more than anything a girl could derive from it. Not one of the three perhaps went any further, or at least went so far as to ask whether there were any means by which he could appropriate such a fortune, except indeed Raymond, who was in a most uncomfortable state, knowing that his mother intended him to begin at once to "pay attention" to Lucy, and not knowing in the least how to begin. Lucy was put into the most comfortable chair as if she had been a dowager, and even Jock was wooed as he had never been wooed before.

"Oh, you will soon learn how to play," all the young people said in a chorus, "it is very easy."

Lucy thought they were all very kind, and she thought the lawn a kind of little paradise with all the sights and sounds of the ruder world shut out.

"Emmie and I almost live here," Mrs. Rushton said. "We bring out our work in the morning; you can't think how pleasant it is. I wish, my dear Lucy, that it could have been arranged that you should live with your guardian instead

of those good relations of yours. They are very nice, but it is always more cheerful where there are young people. I wish it could be managed. The Fords are excellent people, but they are in a different rank of society. I was speaking to Mr. Rushton about it, but he does not seem to think anything can be done; men are so entirely without resources. You may depend upon it I should find some way in which it could be done, if it depended on me."

"I don't think it could be done, Mrs. Rushton; it is all very exact in the will."

"Then I suppose you stand up very firmly by the will—in every particular, my dear?" Mrs. Rushton said, with a significant look.

"How could I help it?" said Lucy. She preferred looking at the croquet to discussing the will, and she wished Raymond would go and play and not stand by her chair, looming over her. His mother looked at him from time to time, and when these appeals were made he took his hands out of his pockets and grew red, and cleared his throat. But nothing ever came of it. Lucy did not know what to say to this embarrassed young man; he seemed so much further off

from her, by being so much nearer than Sir Tom. At length she asked, with some diffidence, "Are you not going to play?"

"Oh! my mother thought you would like—to walk round the garden."

"You goose!" cried his mother. "The fact is, Lucy, Ray thought you would like to see all the old-fashioned corners. They are not like the gardens at the Hall. Oh! we don't pretend to anything so fine; but we have heaps of flowers, and I think that is the chief thing. Ray is devoted to the garden—he wants so much to show you round."

And a few minutes after Lucy found herself walking by Ray, who was very shy, and had not a notion what to say to her, nor had she what to say to him. He took her along a commonplace path, and showed her the flower-beds, that is to say he intimated, with a wave of his hand and a blush, that here were the roses, and there—"I'm sure I don't know what you call these things," Ray said.

"Are you not very fond of flowers, then? I thought Mrs. Rushton—"

"Oh yes, I'm very fond of them—some, you

know; but I never can remember the names; it is like songs, I'm very fond of music; but I never can remember the words."

This was a long speech, and he felt better after it. However little inclined you may feel to do your duty, there is a sense of satisfaction in having done it. "Do you sing?" he added, emboldened by his own success.

"No," Lucy said; and then the poor young fellow was balked, and the path which seemed to be opening before him was cut suddenly short. He gave a sigh of disappointment, and plunged his hands deeper than ever into his pockets to seek inspiration there. ?

"Mamma thinks we should go out to-morrow," he said.

"Yes?" This monosyllable was interrogative, and gave him encouragement. He cleared his throat again.

"I could show you some very nice rides—the way to the picnic on Thursday, is very pretty. Were you ever at the old abbey at Burnside? Quantities of people go—"

"I have passed it," said Lucy; "when we rode at school."

"Oh! did you ride at school? I don't think that could be much fun—all girls. Picnics are not very much fun either."

"I never saw one. I should think it would be nice," said Lucy, with some doubt.

"Oh well, perhaps if you were never at one before—I daresay it will be nice when—when *you* are there, Miss Trevor," said Ray, growing very red; "but then you see I never went with you before."

Lucy looked at him with some surprise, totally unable to divine why he should flourish so wildly ~~the croquet-mallet he was carrying~~ and blush and stammer so much. She was entirely unaware that she had assisted at the production of Raymond's first compliment. She took it very quietly, not knowing its importance.

"My mother thinks Emmie can ride," he went on, after a confused pause; "but she can't a bit. Some girls are famous—take fences, and everything you can put before them. There are the Morton girls—I suppose you know the Mortons?"

"I don't know anyone—except the girls who were at school."

“Oh, there were some great swells, were there not,” said Raymond, “at that school?”

Perhaps, for the first time, Lucy felt a little pleasure in repeating the names of her school-fellows, information which Raymond received with awe.

“That’s a cut above us,” he said, “they were all awfully angry at home because the old ladies wouldn’t have Emmie. I suppose you were different.”

“It was because of my having so much money,” said Lucy, calmly. “Oh, but you need not laugh. Mrs. Stone said a girl with a great deal of money wanted more training.”

“I can’t see that,” cried Raymond; “not a bit. It doesn’t take much education to spend a great fortune, when a fellow has to make his own way like me; I should think there was nothing so jolly as to have a lot of money, so much that you never could get through it; by Jove! I wonder how it feels,” he said, with a laugh.

To this question, if it was a question, Lucy made no reply. It was the subject upon which she could talk best; but she was not a great talker, and Raymond was a kind of being very

far off from her, whom she did not understand.

"I don't think there is much more to see," he said, "there is not much. I can't think what my mother meant to show you the garden. Would you like to go back and try a game? I'll teach you if you like. I suppose I may say you will ride to the picnic? Emmie will go (as well as she knows how), and I——"

"If Jock may come too."

"Oh!" cried Raymond, "there will be no want of chaperons, you know. My mother is coming, and no doubt some more old ladies. It will be all right, you know," said the youth with a laugh. This speech made Lucy ponder, but confused her mind rather than enlightened it. She went back to the lawn with him into the midst of the croquet players, with very little more conversation, and Mrs. Rushton looking on anxiously, gnashed her teeth behind the tea-urn. "He did not seem to me to find a word to say to her," she lamented afterwards; "what is the good of spending all that money on a boy's education if at the end of it he can't say a word for himself." And her husband answered with those comforting words which husbands have the secret of. "You had

much better let scheming alone," he said. "You will put me in a false position if you don't mind, and you'll never do any good to yourself." We are ashamed to say the monosyllable was "Stuff!" which Mrs. Rushton replied.

But the afternoon was very pleasant to Lucy ; and Jock enjoyed it too, after a while, learning the game much more quickly than his sister, and getting into an excitement about it which she did not share. The little fellow remained in the foreground brandishing a mallet long after the party had melted away—and took possession of the lawn altogether, tyrannising over the little Rushtons, when Lucy was taken in to dinner with the grown up members of the family. "Mrs. Rushton says you may come with me, Jock," Lucy said, but Jock resisted strenuously. "It is only when you go we can have a real game ; you are all duffers," said the little boy with a contempt which he was much in the habit of showing to his sister. Thus they were launched upon life and society in Farafeld. Mrs. Rushton proposed the brougham to Lucy when the time came to go home, but, on hearing that she would prefer to walk, declared that she too was dying for a little

fresh air, and that the cool of the evening was delightful. Then they sallied forth in a body, Raymond by Lucy's side. It was all very pleasant. He was not a brilliant talker indeed, but Lucy did not want anything very brilliant, and what with the little pricks and stimulants provided by his mother, who walked behind, Raymond excelled himself. It was cheerful even to see the little party making its way along the cool twilight ways, with soft interchange of voices and laughter, little Jock again holding his sister's hand, while Raymond was skilfully poked and bantered into talk. If it was a scheme it was not very deeply laid, and meant nothing cruel. Would not Raymond Rushton be a perfectly good match for her, should it come to pass? and why should not Raymond have the great fortune as well as another? His mother felt all the glow of virtuous consciousness in her breast. He was a good son, and would make a good husband. In every way, even in respect to family and position, old Trevor's daughter in marrying Raymond would do very well for herself.

CHAPTER V.

POPULARITY.

LUCY found the picnic very amusing. She had never known any of the delights of society ; and the gay party in the Abbey ruins, and the ride—though Emmy did not know in the least how to sit her pony, and Raymond rode a tall and gaunt animal of extremely doubtful race, which might have drawn a fly, or a hearse, for anything his appearance said to the contrary—was pleasant all the same. The party was not very large, but it included the best people in Farafeld, and among others, the Rector and his family, who were all very gracious to Lucy. “ You must not forget that I am partially your guardian,” the Rector said. “ If you flirt I have a right to pull you up. If you distinguish

one young fellow more than another, I shall probably ask what are your intentions? So beware," he cried, laughing and holding up a finger of warning. And all the Rectory girls were as friendly as if they had possessed a brother, which unfortunately was not the case. "If there had been a boy among us, of course he should have tried for the prize," they all said with cheerful frankness, which Mrs. Rushton did not relish.

Lucy, however, had a guardian who was more alarming than the Rector. Out of civility to her, Philip had been asked, and Philip conducted himself in a way which called forth the dire displeasure of all who had any intentions upon Lucy's peace. He was always appearing wherever she went, stalking continually across the scene, like a villain in the theatre, appearing suddenly when least expected. "What was the fellow afraid of?" the Rector said, "he had no chance; he was not even in the running." But he was Lucy's cousin, and in this capacity he was privileged to push forward, to make his way through a group, to call to her familiarly to "come and see" something, or even to persuade her that the thing she was invited to do on the other

hand was impossible. "You can't go there, Lucy, the mud would be up to your knees, come this way and I'll show you all you want," or, "You never will be able for that climb, I will show you an easier way." Thus Philip, who had been so irreproachable and popular, made himself disagreeable in society for the first time. Perhaps the chief cause of it was that Katie was there. He had taken himself sharply to task after that one evening of enchantment, which was so new and so unusual that he had given way to it without an effort. The more delicious it was, the more Philip had taken himself to task. He tried to analyse it, and make out how it was that he had been so deeply affected. A reasonable man, he said to himself, must be able to give an account of all the mental processes he passed through; but here was a mental process which was inexplicable. Every interest, every argument pointed to Lucy as the object of his thoughts. And now that he saw Lucy among other people, and observed the court that was paid to her, it became intolerable to Philip to think of a stranger who had nothing to do with the family, carrying her off and her

fortune, which belonged to the Rainys. He could not think of such a thing with composure. For himself he liked Lucy well enough, and probably the most suitable arrangement in the circumstances for both of them, would have been the *marriage de convenance*, which is not allowed as a natural expedient in England, in name at least. But when he remembered the evening at the Terrace, when he had been so foolish, Philip could not understand himself. On various occasions he had attempted to analyse it—what was it? Lucy had blue eyes as well as Katie Russell, she was about the same height. To be sure her hair did not curl, and during the course of his analysis, he recollected with dangerous distinctness the blowing out of the curls in the soft evening breeze. But who could analyse a curl, or understand how such an insignificant detail could give softness to the air, and melody to the wind, and make the very stars in heaven look their best? One of the Rector's daughters had a great many curls, far more complete articles than the curls of Katie, but they did not produce the same effect.

After this unsuccessful attempt at analysis, Philip kept himself away from Katie, and kept

watch upon his cousin. He was determined to appropriate the one, and, if he could help, not so much as to see the other. It was the easiest way. But these two objects together made the picnic a very harassing and painful pleasure to the young schoolmaster. When Raymond Rush-ton was pushed by his mother's exertions to Lucy's side, Philip did not fail to do his best to hustle him politely away. He was constantly at hand with an appeal to Lucy, Lucy. At least he was determined that everybody should see he had a claim upon her, and a prior claim to all the rest of the world. But still he could not but remain conscious of the presence of the other girl. In all the guarded and careful intercourse which he had previously had with society in Farafeld, as a man on his promotion, and anxiously attentive to rules, Philip had never asserted himself, never put himself into undue prominence, never presumed upon the kindness of the friends who were at the same time his patrons, before. But it could not be denied that he made himself disagreeable about Lucy that afternoon; her name was continually on his lips. He would let her have no rest. He stepped in

front of everybody, broke up all the groups of which she formed a part, and followed her with vigilant watch everywhere. Had his relationship to the heiress turned his head—or was it possible that he thought himself worthy of all that fortune, that he thought she would choose him for the partner of her splendour, the company asked each other? “I am sure it is a thing to which Mr. Rushton for one would *never* give his consent,” said the giver of the feast. The Rector was not quite so certain. “After all it would be no *mésalliance*, for they are exactly in the same position,” he said; but then it was well known the Rector looked upon his association with Lucy’s other guardians as more a joke than a serious duty. Talks were going on about her in almost every group, everybody was interested in the great heiress; people wished to be introduced to her, as if the poor little girl had been a notability, and so to be sure she was.

The riding party went off rather earlier than the others, and before the whole party was got under weigh a considerable time elapsed. Philip had insisted upon putting his cousin into her saddle himself; he was not clever at so un-

usual an office, and he could not help feeling, when she was gone, that he had not done himself any good by his assiduities. He was as sensitive as a thermometer to the fluctuations of public opinion, and he perceived at once that he had done himself harm. The company in general were not unwilling to let him see that nobody particularly wanted him, and that though they were kind and invited him, they did not expect any very great advantage from his presence. Thus Philip spent the interval in wandering about in a somewhat vague manner, not sought by any one. He could never tell how it was that at last he found himself in one of the carriages by Katie Russell's side. He had not done it, nor had she done it, for Katie was greatly piqued by the persistent way in which he had avoided her, and her pride was up in arms; but when he turned his head and saw, in the gathering dusk, the little twist of the curl which he had been so utterly unable to analyse, a sudden change of sentiment, still farther beyond the reach of analysis, came over Philip. How was it? nothing more illogical, more unreasonable, ever happened to a philosophical schoolmaster. Instead of the

uncomfortable state of effort in which he had spent the day, the young man's soul glided back in a moment into that curious lull of enchantment which had come over him at the Terrace. Once more the very air grew balmy and caressing, the earth smelt sweet, the night wind blew in his face like a caress, and all the individual sounds about ran into one hum of happiness, and satisfaction, and peace. No cause for it! only the fact that it was *that* girl, and not another who sat next him in the brake, among all the chattering and the laughter. Was there ever any cause so inadequate? but this was how it was. The carriage stopped opposite the Terrace to put down Katie. She had only a little way to walk from that point to the White House, which shone faintly through the darkness with a few lights in the windows. Philip did not quite know how, but somehow he had made his peace with Katie, and he it was who jumped down to help her out, and constituted himself her escort. They walked again side by side down the same enchanted road.

"There is no mist to-night, and not so many stars," he said; and Katie answered, "No, not

half so many stars," showing, as he said to himself afterwards, that she remembered too. She was more serious now than after that first evening at the Terrace, walking along very demurely by his side, and owning that she was tired. "But we have had a very pleasant day, don't you think so, Mr. Rainy?" Katie asked; to which Philip answered, "Ye-es," with a little doubt.

"The drive back has been delightful," he said, "the air is so soft. I don't know that I enjoyed so much the first part. It irritates me, perhaps foolishly, to see the fuss all those people make with Lucy. It was really too much for me to-day; I felt bound to put a stop to it as far as I could. Lucy is a very nice girl, but to see them, you would think there was nobody like her. It makes me angry. I daresay it is very foolish, for Lucy is sensible enough to know that it is not herself but her money that so much court was paid to. But the drive home was worth all the rest put together," Philip said, with fervour. This made Katie's head droop a little with shyness and pleasure.

"It was very nice," she said, in more guarded tones, and with a little sigh of content. "But,

Mr. Rainy, you must not vex yourself about Lucy. That is what she has to go through, just as I must go through my governessing. She is sure to have everybody after her wherever she goes, but she is so sensible it never makes any difference ; she is not spoiled a bit."

"Do you think so ? do you really think so ? that will make my mind much more easy about her," said Philip. As if Katie was a judge ! This was the reflection she herself made ; and Katie could scarcely help laughing, under the shadow of night, at the sudden importance of her own judgment. But, after all, however young one may be, one feels that there is a certain reasonableness in any reliance upon one's opinion, and she answered with a gravity that was not quite fictitious, that she was sure of it, and did all she could to comfort Philip, who, on his part, exaggerated his anxiety, and carefully refrained from all allusion to that secret unwillingness to let the great Rainy fortune go to anyone else, which had moved him powerfully during the day. They took leave at the door of the White House, as they had done before, but not till after a pause and a lingering talk, always renewed upon some

fresh subject by Philip just as she held out her hand to say good-night. He had held that hand quite two minutes in his, on the strength of some new and interesting subject which suddenly occurred to him at the last moment, when Katie, seized with a little panic, suddenly withdrew it and darted away. "Good night," she said, from the door-step, nodding her head and waving her hand as before, and once more Philip felt as if a curtain had dropped, shutting out heaven and earth, when the door opened and shut, and a gleam of light shone out, then disappeared. Analyse it! he could not analyse it. He had never been so happy before, nor so sad, nor so fortunate, nor so desolate; but how he could be so ridiculous as to be moved in this way, Philip could not tell. He went back along the dark road, going over every word she had said, and every look she had looked. Lucy's window shone all the way before him, the lights in it glimmering out from the dark front of the Terrace. It seemed to Philip that he could not get rid of Lucy. He felt impatient of her, and of her window, which seemed to call him, shining as with a signal light. Its importunity was such,

that he decided at last to cross the road and call at the door, and ask if she had got home in safety. It was an unnecessary question, but he was excited and restless, half hating Lucy, yet unable to overcome the still greater hatred he had, and terror, of seeing her fall into some one else's hands. When his voice was heard at the door, Mrs. Ford rushed out of her parlour with great eagerness.

"Come in, Philip, come in," she cried; "I heard the carriage stop, but what have you been doing all this time? I just hoped it might be you;" then she came close up to him and whispered, "Lucy came in in such good spirits. She said you had been there; she said you had been very attentive. If you would like to have a horse to ride to go with them, to cut out that Raymond Rushton, don't you hesitate, Philip; tell them to send the bill to me."

"Is that Philip?" Lucy asked from the stairs, almost before the whisper was over. He was half flattered, half angry, at the cordiality of his reception. He walked upstairs to the drawing-room, feeling himself drawn by a compulsion which annoyed him, yet pleased him. The room

was very bright with gaslight, the windows shut, as Mrs. Ford thought it right they should always be at such a late hour. Lucy had been superintending Jock, who was audible in his little room behind humming himself to sleep. "I thought it was your voice, Philip," she said. "Did you like it? Thank you for being so kind to me, but I thought sometimes you did not like it yourself."

"I liked it well enough; but what I did not like was to see what a position you have been put into, Lucy," said her cousin; "that was why I took so much trouble. It makes one think worse of human nature."

"Because they are kind to me?" said Lucy, with surprise.

"Because they are—absurd;" said Philip. "You must see very well they cannot mean all that. I should think a sensible girl would be disgusted. I wanted to show you what nonsense it all was, as if their whole happiness depended on showing you that waterfall, or the abbey tower or something. That was why I interfered."

"I thought," said Lucy, "it was out of kindness; and that everybody was kind as well as you."

“Kindness—that is all nonsense;” Philip felt, as he spoke, that of all the mistakes of the day none was so great as this attempt to make Lucy uncomfortable, and to throw suspicion upon all the attention she had received, including his own; but he could not help himself. “You will find out sooner or later what their motives are, and then you will remember what I have said.”

Lucy looked at him very wistfully. “You ought to help me, Philip,” she said, “instead of making it harder.”

“How do I make it harder? I only tell you that all that absurd adulation must conceal some purpose or other. But I am always very willing to help you, Lucy,” he said, softening; “that is what I tried to do to-day.”

When he had administered this lecture, Philip withdrew, bidding her good night, without saying anything about the other good night which had preceded this. “You may always rely upon me,” he said, as he went away. “Thank you,” said Lucy, a little ruefully. He was her relation, and her natural counsellor; but how unlike, how very unlike to Sir Tom!. She sighed, discouraged in her enjoyment of the moment, feeling

that Philip was the best person to whom she could venture to confide any of those Quixotic projects which her father's will had made lawful and necessary. He was the very best person who could tell her how much was necessary to give ease of mind and leisure to a sick young barrister. Philip was the only individual within her reach who could possibly have satisfied her, or helped her on this point. She sighed as she assisted at the putting out of the gas. There was nobody but Sir Tom.

Philip did not feel much more comfortable as he went away ; he felt that he had done nothing but scold Lucy, and indeed his inclination was to find fault with her, to punish her if he could for the contradiction of circumstances. That she should be capable of taking away all that fortune and bestowing it upon some one who was a stranger, who had nothing to do with the Rainys, and who would probably condescend to, if he did not despise, the head of that family, Philip himself, was intolerable to him. He felt that he ought to interfere, he ought to prevent it, he ought to secure this wealth to himself. But then something gave him a tug exactly in the

opposite direction. If it had but been Katie Russell who was the heiress ! She was nobody ; it would be madness for him, a young man on his promotion, to marry thus as it were in his own trade, and condemn himself to be nothing but a schoolmaster for ever. Indeed it would be folly to marry at all—unless he married Lucy. A young man who is not married has still metaphorically all the world before him. He is very useful for a dinner party, to fill up a corner. In most cases he is more or less handy to have about a house, to make himself of use. But a man who is married has come out from among the peradventures, and has his place fixed in society, whatever it may be. He has come to what promotion is possible, so far as society is concerned—unless indeed he has the power to advance himself without the help of society. Katie Russell was a simple impossibility, Philip said to himself, angrily, and Lucy—she was also an impossibility. There seemed nothing to be done all round but to rail against fate. When he had settled this with a great deal of heat and irritation, he suddenly dropped all at once into the serenest waters, into an absolute lull of all

vexation, into that state of semi-trance in which, though walking along Farafeld streets, towards Kent's Lane, he was at the same time wandering on the edge of the Common, with a soft rustle beside him of a muslin dress, and everything soft, from the stars in the sky, and the night air blowing in his face, to his own heart, which was very soft indeed, melting with the tenderest emotion. It could not do anyone any harm to let himself go for this night only upon such a soft delightful current. And thus after all the agitations of the day, he ended it with his head in the clouds.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HARE WITH MANY FRIENDS.

IT will be seen from all this that Mrs. Ford was but an indifferent guardian for an heiress. Her ideas of her duty were of a peculiar kind. She had newly furnished the drawing-room. She had sweetbreads and other dainties for dinner, If Lucy had been fond of cake, or muffins, or buttered toast, she might have revelled in them ; but it did not occur to the careful housekeeper to give herself much trouble about Lucy's visitors. When Mrs. Rushton called, indeed, Mrs. Ford would sail into the room in her stiffest silk (which she kept spread out upon her bed, ready to put on at a moment's notice) and take her part in the conversation ; but she saw the young men come and go with the greatest indifference,

and did not disturb herself out of her usual habits for them. Though she entertained the worst suspicions in respect to Mrs. Stone's motives, she did not object to St. Clair, neither did she dislike Raymond Rushton, though she saw through (as she thought) all his mother's devices. We will not attempt to explain this entirely feminine reasoning. It was the reasoning of a woman on a lower level of society than that which considers chaperons necessary. She saw no harm in St. Clair's appearance in the morning to teach Jock, though Lucy, not much better instructed than Mrs. Ford was always present at the lessons, and profited too in a mild way. Mr. St. Clair came every morning, turning the pink drawing-room into a school-room, and pursuing his work with so much conscience that Lucy herself began to learn a little Latin by listening to Jock's perpetual repetitions. She was very anxious that Jock should learn, and consented to hear all the story about the gentleman and the windmills, in order to bribe him. "I think he must have been cracked all the same," Lucy said. "Oh! I don't say, dear, that he was not a very nice gentle-

man; and after you have learned your lessons, you can tell me a little more." Mr. St. Clair made himself of great use to Lucy too. He brought her books in which she could read her history at much less cost than in her dry textbooks; and helped her on in a way for which she was unfeignedly grateful. And after the intercourse of the morning there was the meeting afforded by that evening stroll in the half light after tea, which Jock considered his due. Mrs. Stone too loved that evening hour, and the soft dusk and rising starlight, and was always to be found on the common with her light Shetland shawl over her handsome head, under the dutiful escort of her nephew. The two little parties always joined company, and a great deal of instructive conversation went on. On one of these evenings, Lucy had been waylaid by a poor creature with a pitiful story which went to the girl's heart. It had already become known in Farafeld that there was in the Terrace a young lady who had a great deal of ready money, and a very soft heart.

"Who was that woman, Lucy?" said Mrs. Stone as they met at the door of the White

House. They had been standing there, waiting for her, aunt and nephew both, watching for her coming. "I suppose she was a beggar; but you must take care not to give too much in that way, or to get yourself a reputation among them; you will be taken in on every side, and it will vex you to be deceived."

"Yes," said Lucy simply. "It would vex me very much, more than anything else I can think of. I would rather be beaten than deceived."

This made Mrs. Stone wince for a moment—till she reflected that she had no intention of deceiving Lucy, but, in reality, was trying to bring about the very best thing for her, the object of every girl's hopes.

"Then who was this woman?" she said.

"Indeed, I did not ask her name. She was—sent to me. What do you think is right?" said Lucy, "to give people money, or a little pension, or——"

"A little pension, my dear child! a woman you know nothing about. No, no, give me her name, and I will have her case inquired into, and if she is deserving——"

“ I don’t think it is anybody that is deserving, Mrs. Stone,”

“ Lucy! my dear, you must not—you really *must* not, act in this independent way. What do you know about human nature? Nobody who is not deserving should be allowed to come near a child of your age.”

St. Clair laughed. “ That might cut a great many ways,” he said. “ Perhaps, in that case you would have to banish most of the people Miss Trevor is in the habit of seeing.”

“ You, for example.”

“ That was what I was about to suggest,” he said, folding his hands with an air of great humility. This beguiled Lucy into a smile, as it was meant to do; and yet there was a certain sincerity in it—a sincerity which seemed somehow to make up for, and justify in the culprit’s own eyes, a good deal of deceit; though, indeed, St. Clair said to himself, like his aunt, that he was using no deceit; he was trying to get the love of a good and nice girl, one who would make an excellent wife; and what more entirely warrantable, lawful, laudable action could a young man do?

“ You are making fun,” said Lucy, “ but I am in great earnest. Papa, in his will, ordered me to give away a great deal of money. He did not say anything about deserving; and if people are in great want, in need—is it not as hard, almost worse, for the bad people than for the good?”

“ My dear, that is very unsafe, very dangerous doctrine. In this way you would reward the bad for having ruined themselves.”

“ Or make up to them,” said St. Clair, “ a little—as much as anyone can make up for that greatest of misfortunes—for being bad.”

Lucy looked from one to another, bewildered, not knowing which to follow.

“ Yes, it is the greatest of all misfortunes; but still that is sophistry, that argument is all wrong. If the good and the bad got just the same, why should anyone be good?”

“ Oh!” said Lucy with a heave of her breast; but though her heart rose and the colour came to her cheeks, she had not sufficient power of language to communicate her sentiments, and she was grateful to St. Clair who interposed.

“ Do you think,” he said, “ that anyone is good, as you say, for what he gets? One is good

because one can't help it—or for the pleasure of it—or to please some one else if it does not please oneself.”

“For shame, Frank, you take all the merit out of goodness,” his aunt said.

“Oh, no!” Lucy breathed out of the bottom of her heart. She could not argue, but her soft eyes turned upon St. Clair with gratitude. Perhaps he was not quite right either—but he was far more right than Mrs. Stone.

“Miss Trevor agrees with me,” he said quietly, as if that settled the question; and Lucy would not have been human had she not been gratified, and flattered, and happy. She looked at him with a silent glow of thanks in her eyes, even though in her heart she felt a slight rising of ridicule—as if it could matter whether she agreed or not!”

“This is all very fine,” said Mrs. Stone, “but practically it remains certain that the people who merit your kindness are those to whom you ought to give it, Lucy. I did not know your father had left instructions about your charities.”

“He did not quite mean charities,” said Lucy, “it was that I should help people who wanted

help. He thought we—owed it, having so much;—and I think so too.”

“And therefore you were meditating a pension to the first beggar that came in your way. My dear child! you will be eaten up by beggars if you begin with this wild liberality.”

“It was not exactly—a beggar; it is not that I mean.”

“I will tell you what to do,” said Mrs. Stone, “take the names of the people who apply to you, and bring them to me. I will have the cases thoroughly sifted. We have really a very good organization for all that kind of thing in Farfield, and I promise you, Lucy, that if there is any very hard case, or circumstances which are very pitiful, even though the applicant be not quite deserving, you shall decide for yourself and give if you wish to give; but do let them be sifted first.”

Lucy said nothing; to have “cases” which should be “sifted” by Mrs. Stone, did not seem at all to correspond with her instructions; and again it was St. Clair who came to her aid.

“The holidays are very nearly over,” he said, “and we have a little problem of our own to

settle. Do you know, Miss Trevor, my aunt meditates sending me away."

"Oh!" cried Lucy with alarm. She turned instinctively to Jock, who was roaming about the common before them, "but what should we do then?" she said with simplicity. The guardians had not yet interfered about Jock's training; they had left the little fellow in her hands; and Lucy was very much solaced and comforted by the arrangement in respect to her little brother which St. Clair's delicate health had permitted her to make.

"You forget that I am a wolf in sheep's clothing. I am a ravening lion, seeking whom I may devour. I am an enemy in the camp."

"Is that all because he is a Gentleman?" said Lucy to Mrs. Stone, with wondering eyes.

It was not Mrs. Stone who replied, but Miss Southwood, who had now come out to join them, and who had heard St. Clair's description of himself. She nodded her head, upon which was a close "cottage bonnet" of the fashion of thirty years ago.

"Yes, yes," she said, "it is quite out of the question, it is not to be permitted; not one of the parents would consent to it if they knew."

“The parents do not trouble me much,” Mrs. Stone said, raising her head, “when I think a thing is right, I laugh at parents. They are perfectly free to take the girls away if they object; *I* judge for myself.”

“But you must not laugh at parents,” said the timid sister. “Maria! you make me shiver. I don’t like you to say it even on the common, where there is nobody to hear. There is that child, with his big eyes; he might come out with it in any society. Laugh at—Parents! You might as well say you don’t believe in the—British Constitution, or the—Reformation, or—even the House of Commons—or the Peerage,” Miss Southwood said hurriedly, by way of epitomising everything that is sacred.

“The Reformation is quite out of fashion, it is vulgar to profess any belief in that; and at all times,” said Mrs. Stone, “popular institutions are to be treated with incredulity, and popular fallacies with contempt. Frank is not a ravening lion, he wants to devour nobody but—Jock. Yes, when you do bad exercises he would like to swallow you at one gulp.”

“Is he going away?” said Jock, whom this

reference to himself had roused to attention. Then he said with authority, "He had better come and live with us, there's a spare room; Lucy wants him as much as me. I know there is something she wants, for she looks at him when nobody is noticing, like this——" And Jock gave such an imitation of Lucy's look as was possible to him.

This strange speech made an extraordinary commotion in the quiet group. The two sisters and St. Clair sent each other rapid telegraphic messages by some kind of electricity, which went through and through them all. It was one look of wonder, satisfaction, consternation, delight, that flashed from one pair of eyes to the other, and brought a sudden suffusion to all their faces. As for Lucy, she took it a great deal more quietly. They had the look of having made a discovery, but she did not betray the consciousness of one who has been found out.

"Indeed, I hope Mr. St. Clair will stay. I don't think it would make any difference to the girls," she said; and then she added with a little excitement. "How strange it will be to see them all back again, and me so different."

Grammar had never been Lucy's strong point.

"Should'nt you like to come back?"

Lucy laughed and shook her head.

"I can't tell," she said. "I should—and yet how could I? I am so different. And by and by I should have to go away again. How strange it is that in such a little time, that has been nothing to them, so much should have happened to me."

There passed rapidly through Lucy's mind as she spoke a review of the circumstances and people who had furnished her with so many varied experiences. First and greatest stood the Randolphys, and that other world of life in London, which she knew was waiting for her in the shut up rooms, all shutters and brown-holland, in Lady Randolph's house. She seemed to see these rooms, closed and dim, with rays of light coming in through the crevices and everything covered up, in which her life was awaiting her. The other scenes flitted across her mind like shadows, the episode of the Russells, the facts of her present existence—all shadows; but Grosvenor Street was real, though all the shutters were shut. While this was passing through her mind, the others were giving her credit for visions

very different. They glanced at each other again and Mrs. Stone took her nephew's arm and gave it a significant pressure. She was too much elated to be capable of much talk.

"We must see Lucy home," she said. "It is getting late, and dear little Jock ought to be in bed. I am always glad to see my girls come back—but there is one thing I shall grudge, these evening strolls; they have been very sweet."

"Then you have made up your mind, notwithstanding Miss Trevor's intercession, (for which I thank her on my knees,) to send me away?"

"I cannot send you away while you are necessary to the comfort of—these dear children," Mrs. Stone said. There was a little break of emotion in her voice, and Lucy listened with some surprise. She was scarcely aware that she had interceded, yet in reality she was very glad that Mr. St. Clair should stay. She observed that he held her hand a moment longer than was necessary as he bade her good night, but she did not attach any meaning to this. It was an accident; she was too greatly indifferent to notice it at all.

And thus the tranquil days went on; the

girls came back, but Mr. St. Clair did not go away. He was faithful to Jock and his lessons, and very sympathetic and kind to Lucy, though he did not at all understand the semi-abstraction into which she sometimes fell in his presence, and which was due to her anxious self-inquiries how she could propound to him the question of permanent help. Indeed this abstraction deceived St. Clair as much as his devotion was intended to deceive her. He was taken in his own toils, or, rather, he fell into the trap which little Jock had innocently laid for him. When Lucy looked at him, he thought that he could see the keen interest which the child had discovered in her eyes; and when she did not look at him, he thought she was averting her eyes in maiden bashfulness for fear of betraying herself; and he permitted himself to watch her with more and more tender and close observation. He was far cleverer and more experienced than Lucy, but her simplicity deceived him; and as he gave Jock his lessons, and watched the tranquil figure of the girl sitting by, St. Clair felt, with a throb of excitement, that he was approaching a sort of fabulous termination, a success

more great than anything he had ever actually believed in. For, as a matter of fact, he had never really believed in this chance which his aunt had set before him. He had "gone in for" Lucy as he would have "gone in for" any other temporary pursuit which furnished him with something to do, and satisfied the relatives on whom he was more dependent than was agreeable. But now suddenly the chase had become real, the chance a possibility, or more than a possibility. In such circumstances, what suitor could avoid a growing excitement? The moment the thing became possible, it became wildly exciting, a hurrying pursuit, a breathless effort. Thus while Lucy's thoughts were gravely fixed upon what she considered the chief business of her life, St. Clair, on his side, pursued the object of his wish with an ardour which increased as the end of the pursuit seemed to draw near. His voice took tender inflections, his eyes gave forth glowing glances, his aspect became more and more that of a lover; but Lucy, pre-occupied and inexperienced, saw nothing of this, and there was no one else to divine what the unlucky wooer meant, unless, indeed, it might be Jock, who

saw and heard so much more than any one supposed, so much more than he himself knew.

Side by side along with this pursuit was that of which Mrs. Ford more clearly perceived the danger, the wooing of Mrs. Rushton and her son, Ray. Mrs. Ford's instinct was just, it was the mother who was the most dangerous of the two. Ray, with his hands in his pockets, did not present much of the natural appearance of a hero, and he had still less of the energy and spontaneity of a successful lover than he had of the appearance which wins or breaks hearts ; but, nevertheless, by dint of unwearied exertions he was kept more or less up to the mark. Lucy had another constant visitor, about whose "intentions" it was less easy to pronounce. Philip Rainy began to come very often to the Terrace ; he scorned Ray Rushton, and he paid the compliment of a hearty dislike to St. Clair ; he was suspicious of both, and of all others who appeared in the neighbourhood ; but this was in the true spirit of the dog in the manger, for his own purposes were more confused than ever, and he had no desire to make any effort to appropriate to himself the great prize. He stood by and looked on in

a state of jealous watchfulness, sometimes launching a word of bitter criticism against his cousin ; but unable to force himself to enter the lists, or take a single step to obtain what he could not make up his mind to resign. Sometimes Katie Russell would be with her friend, and then the young schoolmaster went through such tumults of feeling as nobody had thought him capable of. He was the only one that had any struggle in his mind ; but his was a hard one. Love or Advantage, which was it to be ? By this time it was very clear to him that they had no chance to be united in his case.

It was now October, but the weather was still warm, and it was still possible to play croquet on the lawn, amid an increased party of young people, the only kind of dissipation which Lucy's mourning made practicable. Mrs. Rush-ton's regrets were great that a dance was not possible ; but she knew better than to attempt such a thing, and set all the gossips going. "Next year everything will be very different," she said, "unless in the meantime some fairy-prince comes and carries our Lucy away."

"I am her guardian, and I will have nothing to

say to any fairy-prince," Mr. Rushton said. They both gave a glance at their son as they spoke, who was a good-looking young fellow enough, but not much like a Prince Charmant. And Lucy smiled and accepted the joke quite calmly, knowing nothing of any such hero. She heard all his mother's praise of Raymond quite unmoved, saying "Indeed," and "That was very nice;" but without the faintest gleam of emotion. It was very provoking. Mrs. Rushton had made up her mind that Lucy was not a girl of much feeling, but yet would be insensibly moved by habits of association, and by finding one person always at her elbow wherever she moved. Raymond, in the meantime, had profited in a way beyond his hopes. He had got a horse, the better to accompany the heiress on her rides, and his money in his pocket was more abundant; but when his mother spurred him up to a greater display of devotion, the young man complained that he had no encouragement. "Encouragement!" Mrs. Rushton cried; "a girl with no-one-can-tell-how-many thousands a-year, and you want encouragement!" It seemed to her preposterous. Oh, that mothers could but do for sons what they are

so lukewarm in doing for themselves! Mrs. Rushton did all that was possible. She told tales of her boy's courage and unselfishness, which were enough to have dazzled any girl, and hinted and insinuated his bashful love in a hundred delicate ways. But Lucy remained obtuse to everything. She was not clever nor had she much imagination, and love had not yet acquired any place in her thoughts.

This was to be the last croquet-party of the season, and all that was fair and fashionable and eligible in Farafeld was gathered on the lawn, round which the scarlet geraniums were blazing like a gorgeous border to a great shawl. Rarely had Lucy seen so gay a scene. When she had herself got through a game, which she did not particularly care for, she was allowed to place herself in one of the low basket-chairs near the tea-table, at which Mrs. Rushton was always seated. "Was there ever such a child?" Mrs. Rushton said; "she prefers to sit with us dowagers rather than to take her share in the game."

"And what is still more wonderful," said an old lady, who perhaps did not care to hear her-

self called a dowager, "your son, Raymond, seems of the same opinion, though he is a hot croquet-player, as we all know."

"Oh, Ray; I hope he is too civil to think what he likes himself," his mother said, with well assumed carelessness. But this did not take anybody in. And all the elder people watched the heiress, as indeed the younger ones did also in the midst of their game; for though Lucy did not greatly care for his attendance there were some who prized Ray, and to whom his post at her elbow was very distasteful. He was very faithful to that post on this occasion, for St. Clair had posted himself on Lucy's other hand, and Raymond's energies were quickened by opposition.

"Why does not Miss Trevor play croquet?" St. Clair said.

"I have been playing; but it is prettier to look on," said Lucy; "and I am not at all good. I have never been good at any game."

"You are quite good enough for me, Miss Trevor," said Ray. "I never can get on with your fine players, who expect you to study it;

now Walford does study it. He gets up in the morning and practises."

"Mr. Walford is a clergyman, it is part of his duty," said St. Clair. "A layman has a great many exemptions. He may wear coloured ties, and he need not play croquet—unless he likes." Now Raymond had a blue tie, which was generally considered very becoming to him.

"Do you remember the day we had at the old Abbey?" said Ray. "I wonder if we could do that again this season. It was very jolly. Don't you think we might try it again, Miss Trevor? The ruins are all covered with that red stuff that looks so nice in the autumn; and I hear Mayflower is all right again this morning. I went to the stable to ask. I thought as sure as fate she had got a strain; I had a long talk with Simpson about her."

"It was very kind of you, Mr. Rushton."

"Oh, not at all kind—but you can't think I should not be interested in Mayflower. If she did not carry you so nicely even, she's a beauty in herself. And she does carry you beautifully—or rather it's you, Miss Trevor, that——"

"Yes," said St. Clair, "that is how I would

put it. It is you Miss Trevor who witch the the world with such noble horsemanship that any animal becomes a beauty. That is the right way to put it."

"But there is no noble horsemanship in my case," Lucy said with a smile.

"Oh, come, I don't know that," cried Ray; "if it comes to circus tricks that wouldn't answer for a lady!—but there aren't many better riders than you, Miss Trevor. You don't make any show, but you sit your mare as if you were cut out of one piece, you and she."

"That is quite a poetical description," St. Clair said. "Why am I only a pedestrian, while you two canter by? You cover me with dust, and my heart with ashes and bitterness when you pass me on the road. Why is one man carried along on the top of the wave, in the most desirable company, while another trudges along in the dust all by himself? Your ride opens all the problems of life, Miss Trevor, to the poor wretch you pass on the way."

Lucy looked at him wistfully. It was the look which Jock had described, and it moved St. Clair greatly, but yet he did not know what meaning

was in her eyes. Mrs. Rushton saw it too, and it seemed to her that St. Clair was getting the best of it. She called to him suddenly, and he left his post with great reluctance. He had more to say than they had, he had more experience altogether; and it was not to subject the heiress to the seductions of Mrs. Stone's nephew that Mrs. Rushton had asked him here.

"Don't you play?" she said, "they are just looking for some one to make up the game. It would be so kind of you to join them. I know they are rather young for you, Mr. St. Clair, but it would be all the more kind if you were to play."

"It would be too kind," he said; he had all his wits about him, "they do not care for grandfathers like myself. Let me look on as becomes my years, or better still let me help you. There must be some lady of my own standing who wants to be helped to some tea."

"You are too quick for me," she said, "you know that is not what I mean; you must not stay among the dowagers. The girls would never forgive me if I kept all the best men here."

"Ah, is that so?" he said. "But we are making

ourselves very useful. Your son is taking charge of Miss Trevor, who is a very important person and requires a great deal of attention, and I am handing the cake. Mrs. Walford, you will surely take some, I am charged to point out to you how excellent it is."

"It is too good for me," said the old lady whom he addressed, shaking all the flowers on her bonnet. She was the curate's mother, and she thought it her duty to back her hostess up. "You should not mind us, Mr. St. Clair; the girls will be quite jealous if they see all the young men handing cake."

"Then I must take it to Miss Trevor," St. Clair said.

Meanwhile, Ray was taking advantage of his opportunity. "Won't you come for a turn, Miss Trevor? Some fellows are so pushing they never know when they are wanted. Do come if it was just to give him the slip. Why should he be always hanging on here? Why ain't he doing something? If a fellow is out in the world he ought to stay out in the world, not come poking about here."

"He is not strong, he is not well enough for his profession," Lucy said.

"Oh, that is bosh. I beg your pardon, Miss Trevor, but only look at him, he is *fat*. If he is not strong it is the more shame for him, it is because he has let himself get out of training," Ray said.

Lucy glanced at St. Clair with the cake in his hand, and a very small laugh came from her. She could not restrain it altogether, but she was ashamed of it. He *was* fat. He was more handsome than Ray, and a great deal more amusing; and he had an interest to her besides which no one understood. She could not dismiss from her mind the idea that he was a man to be helped, and yet she could not but laugh, though with a compunction. A man who can be called fat, appeals to no one's sympathies. She had got up rather reluctantly on Raymond's invitation, but he had not succeeded in drawing her attention to himself. She was still standing in the same place when St. Clair hastened back.

"You are going round the grounds," he said, "*à la bonne heure*, take me with you, please, and save me from croquet. I don't know the mysteries

of the labyrinths, the full extent of Mr. Rushton's grounds."

"Oh, there is no labyrinth," Lucy said.

"And there are no mysteries," cried Ray indignantly, three people walking solemnly along a garden path abreast is poor fun. "Didn't my mother put croquet on the card?" he added, "it is always for croquet the people are asked. It is a pity you don't like it." Ray wanted very much to be rude, but he was better than his temper, and did not know how to carry out his intention.

"Isn't it?" said St. Clair coolly, "a thousand pities. I am always getting into trouble in consequence, but what can I do, Miss Trevor? I hate croquet. It is *plus fort que moi*; and you do not like it either?"

"Not very much," Lucy answered, and she moved along somewhat timidly between the two men, who kept one on each side of her. Raymond did not say much. It was he who had brought her away, who had suggested "a turn," but it was this fellow who was getting the good of it. Ray's heart was very hot with indignation, but his inventive powers were not great, and in his anger he could not find a word to say.

“It is a peculiarity of society in England that we cannot meet save on some practical pretence or other. Abroad,” said St. Clair with all the confidence of a man who has travelled, “conversation is always reason enough. After all it is talk we want, not games. We want to know each other better, to become better friends; that is the object of all social gatherings. The French understand all these things so much better than we.”

This the two young people beside him listened to with awe, neither of them having ever set foot on foreign soil.

“For my part,” cried Ray, suddenly; “I don’t see the good of that constant chattering. Far better to do something than to be for ever talk—talking. It may suit the French, who ain’t good for much else; but we want something more over here. Besides what can you talk about?” the young man went on; “things can’t happen just to give you a subject, and when you have said it’s a fine day, and what a nice party that was at the Smiths—what more have you got to say?”

“I quite agree with you,” said St. Clair;

“when you have no more than that to say it is a great deal better to play at something. But yet conversation has its advantages. Miss Trevor, here is one last rose. It is the last that will come out this season. Oh yes, there are plenty of buds, but they are belated, they will never get to be roses. There will come a frost to-night and slay them all in their nests, in their cradles. This one is all the sweeter for being on the edge of ruin. I will gather it for you. A flower,” he said, in a low tone, which Ray could only half hear, “is all a poor man can offer at any shrine.” Raymond looked on, crimson with indignation. It was on his lips to bid this interloper offer what belonged to himself, not a flower out of another man’s garden; and when St. Clair tore his finger on a thorn, the real proprietor of the rose was enchanted; but even this the fellow managed to turn to his own advantage. “It has cost me more than I thought,” he said, so low that this time Ray could not hear anything but a murmur. “It is symbolical, I would give all that is in my veins; but it should buy you something better.” Ray did not hear this; but Lucy did, and it filled her soul with wonder. Her eyes

opened wide with surprise. She had not even read so many novels as she ought, and she was more puzzled than flattered. Besides Lucy's mind was confused with the thought, so strong in Raymond's consciousness, that to cut other people's roses was a doubtful generosity. She stammered a little as she thanked him, and looked as if asking permission of Ray.

"Oh! Mrs. Rushton ought perhaps to have it, as there are so few roses now," Lucy said.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST PROPOSAL.

“**L**UCY, I never thought you were a flirt before,” said Mrs. Rushton, half severe, half jocular. They did not walk home with her now, as they had done in the warm August evenings. It was now dark, and almost all the company had dispersed, and the brougham had been ordered to take Miss Trevor home.

“A flirt!” Lucy looked up with great surprise at the word.

“Oh, yes! you may look astonished; perhaps you don’t call that flirting; but I am old-fashioned. No one has been able to get a word with you all the evening. Now recollect,” said Mrs. Rushton, shaking a forefinger at the culprit. “I am very prim and proper, and I have

Emmie to think of. You must not set her a bad example; and there's poor Ray. You have not a bit of feeling for poor Ray."

Lucy looked at her with very serious inquiring eyes, and went home with a consciousness that there was a rivalry between Mr. St. Clair and Raymond, in which she was more or less involved. Lucy was not very quick of understanding, and neither of them had said anything to her which was quite unmistakeable. Had they mentioned the words love or marriage, she would have known what she had to encounter at once; but she was not on the outlook for implied admiration, and their assiduities scarcely affected her. St. Clair was Jock's tutor, and in constant communication with her; and, no doubt, she thought, it was Mrs. Rushton who made Raymond take so much care of her. This was a shrewd guess as the reader knows, and, therefore, she did not trouble herself about Ray's attentions, or wonder at the devotion of St. Clair. But she had a faint uneasy feeling in her mind. The rose which she had fastened in her dress was very sweet, and kept reminding her of that scene in the garden. This pricked

Lucy's conscience a little as she drove home in the dark alone with it. It ought to have been given to Mrs. Rushton, not to her; the last Devoniansis, sweet like an echo of summer, the only one that was left. St. Clair had no right to gather it, nor she to wear it. It was a robbery in its way, and this made her uncomfortable, more uncomfortable than the accusation of flirting, of which Lucy felt innocent. The night was dark, but very soft and warm for the season, not even a star visible, everything wrapped in clouds and dimness. When the brougham stopped at the door in the Terrace, some one appeared at once to open it for her, to help her out. "Mr. St. Clair!" she cried almost with alarm. "Yes," he said; he was not much more than a voice and a big shadow, but still she could not have any doubt about him. "I hurried on to do my duty as Miss Trevor's servant; they would not have let me walk home with you, but I was determined to pay my duty here."

Lucy was embarrassed by this new attention. "I am so sorry you have taken so much trouble," she said. "I always wait till they have opened the door. Ah! here they are coming; there was

no need, indeed, of anyone. I am sorry you took the trouble."

"Trouble!" he said, "that is not the word. Ah, Miss Trevor, thanks! you are wearing my rose."

"Indeed!" said Lucy. "I am afraid it was not right to cut it. Mr. Raymond looked—it was the last one; and it was theirs—not ours."

"The churl!" said St. Clair, "he ought to have been too proud if you had put your foot upon it, instead of wearing it. How sweet it is—it is where it ought to be." Then he paused, detaining her for a moment. "Yes, the door is open," he said with a sigh. "I cannot deny it. Good night then—till to-morrow."

"Good night!" said Lucy calmly. She wondered what was the matter? What did he mean by it? He held her hand closely, but did not shake it as people in their ordinary senses do when they bid you good night; and he kept Mrs. Ford standing at the door with her candle in her hand, blown about by the draught. Mrs. Ford was sleepy, she did not pay much attention to Lucy's companion. It was past ten o'clock, an hour at which all the Ford household went to bed;

and Mrs. Ford knew herself to be very virtuous and self-denying in sitting up for Lucy, and was a little cross in consequence. She said only, "You are late, Lucy. I wonder what pleasure it can be to anybody to be out of bed at this hour," and shut the door impatiently. The lights were all out except Mrs. Ford's candle, and the darkness in-doors was very different from that soft darkness out of doors. It was only half-past ten, yet Lucy felt herself dissipated. She was glad to hurry upstairs. Jock opened his big eyes as she went through the room in which he slept. He put up a sleepy hand, and softly stroked her rose as she bent down to kiss him. The rose seemed the chief point altogether in the evening. She put it into water on her table, and went to bed with a little tremulous sense of excitement. But she could not tell why she was excited. It was something in the air, something independant of her, a breath as from some other atmosphere straying into her own.

As for St. Clair, he stumbled home across the common, almost losing his way, as the night was so dark, with a little excitement in his mind too. When he got into Mrs. Stone's parlour, where

she sat at the little meal which was her special and modest indulgence, he was greeted by both ladies with much interest and many questions. "Did it go off well?" Miss Southwood said, who liked to hear what there had been to eat at the "heavy tea" which followed the croquet party, and whether there had been wine on the table in addition to the tea. But Mrs. Stone looked still more anxiously in Frank's face. "Are you getting on? Are you making progress?" was what she said. To which he answered with a great deal of earnestness in the words of the poet:

" 'He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.' "

"Has it come so far as that?" said Mrs. Stone.

"I think so—but do not ask me any more questions," he said, and he was treated with the utmost delicacy and consideration. Without another word, a plate with some of Mrs. Stone's delicately-cooked dish was set before him and a large glass of East India sherry poured out, far

better fare than the cold viands and tea prepared for Mrs. Rushton's many guests, while the conversation was gently led into another channel. His feelings could not have been more judiciously studied, for he had been too much intent upon Lucy to eat much at the previous meal, and agitation is exhausting. The only further allusion that was made to the crisis was when Mrs. Stone bade him good night. She kissed him on the cheek, and said softly, "I quite approve your action if you think the occasion is ripe for it, but do not be premature, my dear boy."

"No, I will not be premature," he said, smiling upon her. His heart expanded with a delightful self-confidence. It did not seem to him that there was any cause to fear.

And as he sat in the little room at the end of the long passage, where he was permitted to smoke, and watched the floating clouds that rose from his cigar, the imaginations which rose along with these circling wreaths were beautiful. He saw within his grasp a something sweeter than love, more delicious than any kind of dalliance. Wealth! the power of doing what-

ever he pleased, stepping at once into a position, he, the unsuccessful, which would leave all the successful men behind, and dazzle those who had once passed him by in the race. He was not disinclined towards Lucy. He felt it was in him indeed to be fond of her, who could do so much for him. She could open to him the gates of paradise, she could make him the happiest man in the world. These hyperboles would be strictly true, far more true than they were in the majority of the cases in which they were uttered with fullest sincerity. But nobody could be more sincere than Frank St. Clair in his use of the well worn formulas. It was nothing less than blessedness, salvation, an exemption from ills of life which Lucy had it in her power to confer.

Next morning he went as usual to the Terrace and gave Jock his lesson with a mind somewhat disturbed. The little fellow with his grammar, the tranquil figure of the girl over her books, the ordinary aspect of the room with which he was growing so familiar, had the strangest effect upon him in the state of excitement in which he found himself. The monotony of

the lesson which had to be made out all the the same, word by word, and the strange suspense and expectation in which he sat amid all the calmness of the domestic scene, made St. Clair's head go round. He did not know how to support it; and it was before his hour was out that he suddenly interrupted Jock's repetition with a sudden harsh whisper.

"Run and play," he said, "that is enough for to-day."

He had not even heard what Jock had been saying for the last ten minutes. The child looked up in the utmost surprise. He was stopped in the middle of a sentence, the words taken out of his mouth. He looked with his eyes opening wide.

"Run and play," St. Clair repeated, his lips were quite dry with excitement, "I want to speak to Lucy."

He had never spoken of her as Lucy before, he had never thought of suggesting that Jock should run and play. The child, though startled and indignant, yielded to the emergency which was unmistakable in his instructor's face. He looked at St. Clair for a moment, angry, then yielding

to the necessity. And Lucy, whose interest in her history-book was never of an absorbing description, hearing the pause, the whisper, the little rustle of movement, looked up too. She saw with some astonishment that Jock was leaving the room.

"Have you got through your lessons already?" she cried.

St. Clair made the child an imperative sign, and got up and approached Lucy.

"I have sent him away," he said, and then stood for a moment looking down upon her. She, on her side, looked up with a surprised countenance. There could not have been a greater contrast than that which was apparent between them; he full of excitement, she perfectly calm, though surprised, wondering what it was he was about to say to her, and what his restrained agitation could mean. "I sent him away," said St. Clair, "because I wanted to say something to you, Miss Trevor; I could not delay it any longer. It has been almost more than I could do to keep silence so long."

"What is it?" she said. She was gently anxious, concerned about him, wondering if he

was going to relieve her of her difficulty by confessing his wants, and putting it into her power to help him. It did not occur to Lucy that a man would be very unlikely to confide troubles about money to a girl. The distribution of her money occupied her own mind so much that it seemed, on the contrary, a likely matter to her that others should be so pre-occupied too.

“I have something to say to you,” he repeated; but the look of her mild blue eyes steadfastly directed towards him, made what he had to say a great deal more difficult to St. Clair. A chill doubt penetrated into his mind; he hesitated. The least little uncertainty on her part, a blush, a shade of trouble, would have made everything easier to him; but Lucy was not excited. She “did seriously incline” to hear whatever he might have to say, but her eyes did not even veil their mild light, nor her cheek own the shadow of a flush. To discharge a declaration of love point-blank at a young woman who is gazing at you in perfect composure and ease, without a shade of expectation in her countenance, is no easy matter. Besides, the fact of her composure was, of all things in

the world, the most discouraging to her suitor; and it was what he had not anticipated. It came upon him as a revelation of the most chilling and discouraging kind. "Now that the moment has come," said St. Clair, "all the unkind judgments I may be exposing myself to seem to rise up before me. I never thought of them till now. The sincerity of my feelings was my defence. Now I feel overwhelmed by them. Miss Trevor—Lucy! I feel now that I have been a fool. What I wanted to say, is what I ought not to say."

He covered his face with his hands, and turned away from her. Lucy was much concerned. This little pantomime, which, however, was the sincerest part of all St. Clair's proceedings, took away her indifference at once. Her composed countenance was disturbed, a little colour came to her face.

"Oh, tell me what it is!" she cried.

When he looked at her, there was an air almost of entreaty on Lucy's face. She repeated her petition, "Tell me what it is," looking anxiously up to him. His heart beat very loudly. To

"Put it to the touch,
To gain or lose it all."

is not so easily done in reality as in verse. He drew a long, almost sobbing, breath. He dropped down suddenly on one knee, close to her. This was not any expedient of humility or devotion, but merely to bring himself on a level with her, and as such Lucy understood it, though she was surprised.

"Lucy!" he said (and this startled her still more) "Lucy! don't you know what it is? cannot you guess? haven't you seen it already in every look of my face, in every tone of my voice? Ah, yes, I am sure you know it. I am not a good dissembler, and what else could have kept me here? Lucy! I am not good enough for you, but such as I am, will you have me?" he cried.

"*Have* you, Mr. St. Clair?" Lucy stammered out in consternation. She understood him vaguely, and yet she did not understand him. *Have* him! not give to him, but take from him. He had put it skilfully, without, however, being aware that he was doing so, excitement taking the place of calculation, as it often does. He held out his

hands for hers, he looked at her with eyes full of entreaty, beseeching, imploring. There was nothing fictitious in their eloquence. He meant as sincerely as ever lover meant, and the yes or no was to him, as in the case of the most impassioned wooer, like life or death.

“Yes,” he said, “have me! I am not much of a man, but with you I should be another creature. You would give me what I have always wanted, an inspiration, a motive. Since the first time I saw you, my happiness has been in your hands; for what else do you think I have been staying here? I have not done all I might have done, but, Lucy, if love had not held me, do you think I am good for nothing but to be tutor to a child? I have served for love, like Jacob, for you.”

Lucy gave a low cry at this. She put her hands, not into his, but together, wringing them with sudden pain.

“Oh,” she said, “why did not you tell me before? Oh, Mr. St. Clair, why did I not know?”

“Do you think I grudge it?” he said, “not if it had been as long as Jacob’s. Do you think

I regret having done this for you? not if it had been a lifetime; but, Lucy, you are too good to keep me in suspense, you will give me my reward at the end?"

And this time he took her clasped hands into his, drawing her to him. Lucy's courage had failed for a moment. Confusion and trouble and distress had taken away all the strength from her. There was a mist over her eyes, and her voice seemed to die away in her throat; but at his touch her girlish shyness came to her aid. A flush of shrinking and shame came over her. She drew away from him with an instinctive recoil.

"Mr. St. Clair, I don't know what you want from me. I am very grateful to you about Jock. I thought it was a great favour; but I did not know—Oh, I am very sorry, very sorry that you should have done anything that was not good enough, for me."

"I am not sorry," he said; his heart began to sink, but he looked more lover-like, more eager than ever. "You do not know how sweet it is to serve those one loves. Do you remember what Browning says about Dante's angel, and Ra-

phael's sonnet?" He was a man of culture himself, and he did not reflect that Dante and Raphael and Browning were all alike out of Lucy's way, who stared at him with growing horror, as he pleaded, feeling that he must be citing spectators of his sacrifices for her, who would blame her, and say she used him badly. "This is my sonnet and my picture," he added; "'Once, and only once, and for one only.' Lucy! believe me, I should never have said anything about it, save to prove my dear love."

Blanched with pain and terror, her mild eyes opened widely, her breath coming quick, Lucy looked at him, kneeling by her side, and held herself away, leaning to the other hand to avoid the almost unavoidable contact. She kept her eyes fixed upon him to keep watch, more than anything else, upon what he would do next.

He saw that his cause was lost. There was neither love nor gratitude for love in the stare of her troubled eyes; but he would not give in without another effort. He said, softly sinking his voice, "You ask what I want from you, Lucy? Alas! I thought you would have divined without asking. Your love, dear, in return for mine,

which I have given you. What I want is nothing less than your love—and yourself.”

Again he put out his hands to take hers. To think that this should be all! the mere fancy of a little girl, all that stood between him and bliss, not perhaps the usual kind of lover's bliss, yet happiness, rapture. Impatience seized him, which he could scarcely restrain. Such a trifling obstacle as this, no obstacle at all, for it was clear she could not know what was for her own advantage, what would make her happy. There came an impatient inclination upon him to capture her by his bow and spear, to seize upon her simply and carry her off, and compel her to see what was for her own advantage. But, alas! the rules of conventional life were too many for St. Clair. Though this he felt would have been the natural and the sensible way of proceeding, he could not adopt it. He had still to kneel by her side, and do his best to persuade her. He could not force her to do even what was so evidently for her good.

The extremity of her need brought back Lucy's courage. She felt herself driven to bay, and it

was evident that he must have no doubt as to the answer she gave. She looked at him as steadily as her trembling would permit, a deep flush came over her face, her lips quivered.

“Do you mean that you want to—marry me, Mr. St. Clair?” she said.

St. Clair felt that the moment was supreme. He threw all the passionate entreaty which was possible (and his passion was real enough) into his look, and, gathering her hands into both his, kissed them again and again.

“What else?” he said in a whisper, which must have thrilled through and through a heart in which there was any response. But in Lucy’s there was no response. She stumbled to her feet with an effort, getting her hands free, and leaving her discomfited suitor kneeling by the side of her empty chair in ludicrous confusion. He had, indeed, to grasp hold of the chair, or the sudden energy of her movement would have disturbed his balance too.

“That is impossible, impossible!” Lucy cried, her cheeks burning, her mild eyes glowing, “you must never speak of it again, you must never mention it to me more. “I could not,” she

added, feeling in his look that all was not settled, even by this vehement negative, "I could not, I could never marry *you*; and I do not want to be married at all."

"Not now, perhaps, but some time you will," he said. He had risen from his knee, and stood opposite to her, banishing as best he could his confusion from his face. "Not now; I have been rash, I have frightened you with an avowal which I ought not to have made so soon; but, Lucy, dearest, the time will come."

"Not now, or ever!" she cried, "oh, Mr. St. Clair, believe me! don't let it be all to go over another time; neither now nor ever. I may be frightened, I never thought of anything like this before; but now you have made me think of it, I know—*that* is impossible, it could never, never be!"

"You are very sure of yourself," he said with a little involuntary bitterness; for it is not pleasant to be rejected, even when you think it is the dictate of fright, and St. Clair did not think so, but only pretended so to think.

"Yes, I am very, very sure. Oh, indeed, I am sure. Anything, anything else! If I could help

you to get on, if I could be of any use. Anything else; but that can never be!" said Lucy with tremendous firmness. He looked at her with cynical scorn in his eyes.

"I will never thrust anything upon a lady against her will," he said, "even to save her from the bloodhounds;—one cannot do that, but the time will come—I know very well the time will come." He was as much agitated as if indeed he had loved Lucy to desperation. He went to the table and collected his books with a tremendous vehemence. "I must now wish you good morning, Miss Trevor," he said.

And it was with a troubled heart that Lucy saw him go. What could she have done otherwise? She could not bear that anyone should leave her thus. She longed to be able to offer him—anything that would salve his wound. If he would only take some of the money! if he would only accept her help, since she could not give him herself. She looked after him with her heart wrung, and tears in her piteous eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE DOWN, AND ANOTHER COME ON.

THIS was Lucy's first experience of love-making. It is needless to say that it was very far from being her last; but for the moment it was an appalling revelation to her an incident of the most disturbing and disquieting kind. She was alone for a long time after St. Clair's withdrawal. It was the morning, the time when Mrs. Ford was occupied with household concerns, and Jock, being freed sooner than usual had betaken himself to one of his habitual corners with a book, and was thousands of mental miles away from his sister. She remained alone in that pink drawing-room, in which already she had spent so many lonely hours. There she stood hidden behind the curtains, and watched St. Clair speed-

ing across the road, that skirted the Common, to the White House. She had seen him coming and going a great many times with placid indifference. But she could not be indifferent to anything about him now. His hasty pace, so unlike the usual stateliness of demeanour in which he resembled his aunt, the books under his arm, his stumble as he rushed over the rough ground, all went to Lucy's heart. She was not sorry that she had given forth so determined a decision. That she felt at once, with her usual good sense, was unavoidable. It was not a question upon which any doubt could be left. But she was very sorry to have given him pain, very sorry that it had been necessary. She felt pained and angry that such an appeal should have been made to her, yet at the same time self-reproachful and sore, wondering how it was her fault, and what she could have done. It dismayed her to think that she had voluntarily and deliberately inflicted pain, and yet what alternative had been left her? Now, she thought to herself sadly, here was an end of all possibility of helping a man who was poor, and whom she would have been so glad to help. He would not take any-

thing from her now, he would be angry, he would reject her aid, although so willingly given. This gave Lucy a real pang. She could not get it out of her mind. How foolish, she moralised, to put off a real duty like this, to let it become impossible! She was sitting pondering very sadly upon the whole matter, asking herself wistfully if anything could be done, when Mrs. Rushton came in, full of the plan which Raymond had proposed the evening before. Mrs. Rushton was always elated by a new proposal of pleasure-making. It raised her spirits even when nothing else was involved. But in this case there was a great deal more involved.

“It is the very thing to finish the season,” she said, “we have had a very pleasant season, especially since you came back, Lucy. You have made us enjoy it twice as much as we usually do. For one thing, home has been so much more attractive than usual to Ray. Oh, he is always very good, he does not neglect his own people: still young men will be young men, and you know even Shakspeare talks of ‘metal more attractive’ than a mother. So as I was saying—Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Ford?”

As usual, Mrs. Ford made her appearance, sweeping in her purple silk, which was of a very brilliant and hot hue, and put every other colour out. Her punctual attendance, when ladies came to see Lucy, served her purpose very well, for it made it apparent to these ladies that Lucy's present hostess was a very dragon of jealous carefulness, and was likely to guard the golden apples against all comers as she did from them.

"How do you do?" said Mrs. Ford stiffly, taking a stiff and highbacked chair.

"It is a very fine day," said Mrs. Rushton, "what pleasant weather we are having for this time of the year! I was remarking to Lucy that it had been the most enjoyable summer. I always say that for young people there is nothing so enjoyable as outdoor parties when the weather is good. They get air, and they get exercise, far better than being cooped up in stuffy ball-rooms. I feel quite thankful to Lucy, who has been the occasion of so many nice friendly meetings."

"She has had a deal too much gaiety, I think," said Mrs. Ford, "considering that her poor dear father has not been much more than six months in his grave."

“You cannot really call it gaiety ; oh no, not gaiety ! a few nice quiet afternoons on the lawn, and just one or two picnics. No, Lucy dear, you need not be frightened, I will never suffer you to do anything inconsistent with your mourning. You may rely on me. If anything I am too particular on that point. Your nice black frocks,” said Mrs. Rushton with fervour, “have never been out of character with anything. I have taken the greatest care of that.”

“I don’t say anything about the afternoons,” said Mrs. Ford, “but I know that it was half-past ten when your carriage came to the door last night with Lucy in it. I don’t hold with such late hours. Ford and me like to be in bed at ten o’clock.”

“Ah, that is very early,” Mrs. Rushton said, with an indulgent smile, “say eleven—and I will take care that Lucy has some one with her to see her safe home.”

“Oh, for that matter, there’s always plenty with her,” said the grumbler, “and more than I approve of. I don’t know what girls want with all that running about. We never thought of it in our day. Home was our sphere, and there we

stayed, and never asked if it was dull or not."

"That is very true: and it was very dull. We don't bring up our children like that nowadays," said Mrs. Rushton, with that ironical superiority which the mother of a family always feels herself justified in displaying to a childless contemporary. Mrs. Ford had no children to get the advantage of the new rule. "And," she added, "one feels for a dear child like Lucy, who has no mother, that one is doubly bound to do one's best for her. How poor dear Mrs. Trevor would have watched over her had she been spared! a motherless girl has a thousand claims. And, Lucy," continued her indulgent friend, "this is Ray's party. It is he that is to manage it all; he took it into his head that you would like to see the abbey again."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, surprised that they should show so much thought for her, but quite ready to be pleased and grateful too.

"He and his sister will come and fetch you at two o'clock," she continued, "it will be quite hurriedly got up, what I call an impromptu—but all the better for that. There will be just our own set. Mrs. Stone, of course it would be useless to ask now that school has begun again;

but if there is any friend whom you would like to have—”

It was as if in direct answer to this half question that at that moment the door opened and Katie Russell, all smiles and pleasure, came in. “Lucy,” she cried, “Bertie has come, as I told you, he wants so much to see you, may I bring him in? Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Ford, I did not see that you were here.”

“Don’t mention it,” said Mrs. Ford grimly, “most folks do the same.”

“Is it your brother, the author?” said Mrs. Rushton excited. She was so far out of the world, and so little acquainted with its ways that she felt, and thought it the right thing to show that she felt, an interest in a real living novelist. “Lucy, we must have him come to the pic-nic,” she cried.

But she was not so enthusiastic when Bertie appeared. His success had made a great difference in Bertie’s outward man; he was no longer the slipshod youth of Hampstead, by turns humble and arrogant, full of boyish assurance and equally boyish timidity. Even in that condition he had been a handsome young fellow, with an

air of breeding which must have come from some remote ancestor, as there was no nearer way by which he could have acquired it. When he walked into the room now, it was as if a young prince had suddenly appeared among these commonplace people. It was not his dress, Mrs. Rushton soon decided, for Raymond was as well dressed as he—nor was it his good looks, though it was not possible to deny them; it was—more galling still—*something* which was neither dress nor looks, but which he had, and, alas Raymond had not. Mrs. Rushton gazed at him open-eyed, while he came in smiling and gracious, shaking hands with cordial grace.

“It is not my own boldness that brings me,” he said, “but Katie’s. I am shifting the responsibility off my shoulders on to hers, as you ladies say we all do; but for Katie’s encouragement I don’t know if I would have ventured.”

“I am very glad to see you,” Lucy said, and then they all seated themselves, the central interest of the group shifting at once to the newcomer, the young man of genius, the popular author. He was quite sensible of the duties of his position, and treated the ladies round him

en bon prince with a suitable condescension to each and to all.

“I have a hundred things to say to you from my mother,” he said, “she wishes often that you could see her in her new house, where she is very comfortable. She thinks you would be pleased with it.” This was said with a glance of confidential meaning, which showed Lucy that, though Katie was not aware of it, her brother knew and acknowledged the source from which his mother’s comfort came. And “It is very kind of you to admit us at this untimely hour,” he said to Mrs. Ford, looking at her purple silk with respect, as if it had been the most natural morning dress in the world. “Katie is still only a school-girl, and is guided by an inscrutable system. I stand aghast at her audacity ; but I am very glad to profit by it.”

“Oh, as for audacity,” said Mrs. Ford, “that is neither here nor there, we are well used to it ; but whenever you like to come, Mr. Russell, you’ll find a welcome. I knew your good father well, and a better man never was—”

“Indeed,” said Mrs. Rushton, eager to introduce herself, “I must be allowed to say so too.

I knew Mr. Russell very well, though I never had the pleasure of making acquaintance with his family. I am afraid after the society you must have been seeing you will find Farafield a very benighted sort of place. There is nothing that can be called society here."

"That is so much the better," said Bertie graciously, "one has plenty of it in the season, it is a relief to be let alone: and my object in coming here is not society."

"Oh, I told you, Lucy," cried his sister, "he has come to study."

A frown crossed Bertie's face; he gave her a warning look. "I want rest," he said, "there is nothing like lying fallow. It does one all the good in the world."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Rushton, "I know what that means. You have come to take us all off, Mr. Russell; we will all be put into your new book."

Bertie smiled, a languid and indulgent smile. "If I could suppose that there were any eccentricities to be found in your circle," he said, "perhaps—but good breeding is alike over all the world."

Mrs. Rushton did not quite know what this meant; but it was either a compliment or something that sounded like one. She was delighted with this elegant young man of genius, who was so familiar with and indifferent to society. "If you will come to the little pic-nic I am planning for to-morrow you shall judge for yourself," she said; "and perhaps Mrs. Stone will let your sister come too," she added with less cordiality. Katie, whom everyone knew to be only a governess-pupil, had not attracted her attention much. She had been accepted with toleration now and then as Lucy's friend, but as the sister of a young literary lion, who no doubt knew all kinds of fine people, Katie became of more importance. Bertie took the invitation with great composure, though his sister, who was not *blasée*, looked up with sparkling eyes.

"To-morrow?" he said, "I am Katie's slave and at her disposal. I will come with pleasure if my sister will let me come."

Was it wise? Mrs. Rushton asked herself with a little shiver. She made a mental comparison between this new comer and Ray. The proverbial blindness of love is not to be trusted

in, in such emergencies. His mother saw, with great distinctness, that Raymond had not that air, that *je ne sais quoi*; nor could he talk about society, nor had he the easy superiority, the conscious genius of Bertie. But then the want of these more splendid qualities put him more on Lucy's level. Lucy (thank Heaven!) was not clever. She would not understand the other's gifts; and Ray was a little, just a little taller, his hair curled, which Bertie's did not; Mrs. Rushton thought that, probably, the author would be open to adulation, and would like to be worshipped by the more important members of the community. What could he care for a bit of a girl? So, on the whole, she felt herself justified in her invitation. She offered the brother and sister seats in the break, in which she herself and the greater part of her guests were to drive to the Abbey, and she made herself responsible for the consent of Mrs. Stone. "Of course I shall ask Mr. St. Clair, Lucy," she said. "I always like to ask him, poor fellow! he must be so dull with nothing but ladies from morning till night."

“Happy man,” Bertie said, “what could he desire more?”

“But when those ladies are aunts, Mr. Russell?”

“That alters the question. Though there is something to be said for other people’s aunts,” said Bertie. “I am not one of those who think all that is pleasant is summed up in youth.”

“Oh! you must not tell me that. You all like youth best,” said Mrs. Rushton; but she was pleased. She felt her own previsions justified. A young man like this, highly cultivated and accustomed to good society, what could he see in a little bread and butter sort of girl like Lucy? She gave Bertie credit for a really elevated tone. She was not so worldly-minded as she supposed herself to be—for she did not take it for granted that everybody else was as worldly-minded as herself.

This succession of visitors and events drove the adventure of the morning out of Lucy’s head. And when she went out with Jock in the afternoon, Bertie met them in the most natural way in the world, and prevented any relapse of her thoughts. He told her he was “studying” Fara-

field, which filled Lucy with awe; and begged her to show him what was most remarkable in the place. This was a great puzzle to the girl, who took him into the market-place, and through the High Street, quite unconscious of the scrutiny of the beholders. "I don't think there is anything that is remarkable in Farafield," she said, while Bertie smiling—thinking involuntarily that he himself, walking up and down the homely streets, with an artist's eye alive to all the picturesque corners, was enough to give dignity to the quiet little country place—walked by her side, very slim and straight, the most gentleman-like figure. There were many people who looked with curiosity, and some with envy, upon this pair, the women thinking that only her money could have brought so aristocratic a companion to the side of old John Trevor's daughter, while the men concluded that he was some needy "swell," who was after the girl, and thus exhibited himself in attendance upon her. It came to Mrs. Rushton's ears that they had been seen together, and the information startled her much; but what could she do? She fell upon Raymond, reproaching him for his shilly-

shally. "Now you see there is no time to be lost; now you see that other people have their wits about them," she said; "if you let to-morrow slip, there will be nothing too bad for you," cried the exasperated mother. But Raymond, though he was more frightened than could be told in words, had no thought of letting to-morrow slip. He too felt that things were coming to a crisis. He stood at the window with his hands in his pockets and whistled, as it were, under his breath: He was terribly frightened; but still he felt that what was to be done, must be done, if anything was to be done. So long as it was only St. Clair, whom he thought middle-aged, and who was certainly fat, who was against him, he had not been much troubled; but this new fellow was a different matter. He did not put his resolution into such graceful words, but he too felt that it was time

"To put it to the touch

To gain or lose it all."

As for Lucy, no thought of the further trials awaiting her, entered her mind; but she was not happy. It had ceased to be possible to take those evening strolls which had brought her into such intimate

relations with the inmates of the White House. They had been given up since the girls came back ; and, indeed, the days were so much shorter that they had become impracticable. But when she came upstairs to her lonely drawing-room after tea, when it was not yet completely dark, she could not choose but go to the window, and look out upon the dim breadth of the common, and the lights which began to twinkle in Mrs. Stone's windows. The grassy breadths of broken ground, the brown furze bushes, all stubbly with the husks of the seedpods, the gleam of moisture here and there, the keener touch of colour in the straggling foliage of the hedges, and here and there a half-grown tree, were dim under a veil of mist when she looked out. The last redness of the sunset was melting from the sky. A certain autumnal sadness was in the bit of homely landscape, which, though she was not imaginative, depressed Lucy as she stood at the window. She was altogether depressed and discouraged. Mrs. Ford had been, if not scolding, yet talking uncomfortably to her husband across the girl, of the rudeness of Lucy's friends. " Not that I would go to their parties

if they begged me on their knees," Mrs. Ford had said, "but the unpoliteness of it! And to ask those Russells before my very face, who are not a drop's blood to Lucy." "Well, well, my dear, never mind," her husband had said, "when she's married there will be an end of it." "Married!" Mrs. Ford had said in high disdain. And then Lucy had got up and hastened away, wounded and shocked and unhappy, though she scarcely could tell why. She came and stood at the window, and looked out with the tears in her eyes. Everybody had been very kind to her, but yet she was very lonely. She had a gay party to look forward to the next day, and she believed she would enjoy it; but yet Lucy was lonely. People seemed to struggle over her incoherently, for she knew not what reason, each trying to push the other away, each trying to persuade her that the other entertained some evil motive; and everything seemed to concur in making it impossible for her to carry out her father's will. And there was nobody to advise, nobody to help her. Philip, to whom she would so gladly have had recourse, was cross and sullen, and scolded her for no reason at all, instead of being kind. And

Sir Tom, who was really kind, whom she could really trust to—what had become of him? Had he forgotten her altogether? He had not written to her, and Lucy had not the courage to write to him. What could she do to get wisdom, to know how to deal with the difficulties round her? She was standing within the curtains of the window, looking out wistfully towards the White House, and wondering how Mr. St. Clair would speak to her to-morrow, and if Mrs. Stone would know and be angry, when she was startled by the sound of wheels, and saw a carriage—nay, not a carriage, but something more ominous, the fly of the neighbourhood, the well-known vehicle which took all the people about the common to the railway, and was as familiar as the common itself. It rattled along to the White House, making twice the noise that any other carriage ever made. Could they be going to a party? Lucy asked herself with alarm. But it was no party. There was just light enough left to show that luggage was brought out. Then came the glimmer of the lantern dangling at the finger end of the gardener—that lantern by which, on winter nights, Lucy herself had been so often

lighted home. Then she perceived various figures about the door, and Mrs. Stone coming out, with a whiteness about her head which betrayed the shawl thrown over her cap ; evidently some one was going away. Who could be going away ?

After a while the fly lumbered off from the door, leaving that gleam of light behind, and some one looking out, looking after the person departing. Lucy's heart beat ever quicker and quicker. As the fly approached the lamp-post that gave light to the Terrace, she saw that it was a portmanteau and other masculine belongings that were on the top, and to make assurance sure, a man's head glanced out and looked up at her window. Lucy sank down into a chair and cried. It was her doing. She had driven St. Clair away, out into the hard world, with his heart-disease and his poverty—she who had been brought into being and made rich, for no other end than to help those who were poor !

CHAPTER IX.

THE PICNIC.

LUCY spent a most melancholy night. It was dreadful to her to think that she had been not only "no good," but the doer of harm. She imagined to herself poor St. Clair, with that weakness which prevented him from realizing the hopes of his friends, going away from the shelter and comfort his aunt had provided for him, and the rest of this quiet place, and struggling again among others each more able to fight their way than he—and all because of her, who should have smoothed his way for him, who had the means to provide for him, to make everything easy. It is impossible to describe the compunctions that filled Lucy's inexperienced heart. It seemed all her fault, his departure, and even his incomprehensible pro-

posal—for how could he ever have thought of such a thing of himself, he a Gentleman, and she only a girl, at school the other day—and all the disappointment and grief which must have been caused by his going away, all her doing! though she had meant everything that was kind, instead of this trouble. When she saw Jock preparing for his lessons, her distress overpowered her altogether. “I am afraid Mr. St. Clair is not coming,” she said, faltering, at breakfast; “I think’ he has gone away,” feeling herself almost ready to cry. “Gone away!” said the Fords in a breath; and they exchanged looks which Lucy felt to be triumphant. “And a good riddance too,” cried Mrs. Ford, “a fellow not worth a penny, and giving himself airs as if he had hundreds in his pocket.” “My dear,” her husband said, “perhaps you are too severe. I think sometimes you are too severe; but I can’t say I think him much of a loss, Lucy, if you will take my opinion.” Lucy was not much comforted by this deliverance, and after hearing a full discussion of Mrs. Stone and her belongings, was less consoled than ever. If they were poor so much the more need for him to be successful, so much the more dismal for

him to fail. Lucy could not settle to her own work, she could not resume her own tasks so dutifully undertaken, but in which she felt so little interest. It was easy for Jock to dispose of himself on the great white hearth-rug with his book. She could not help saying this as the sound of the leaves he turned caught her ears. "It does not matter for you," she said, "you are only a small boy, you never think about anything, or wonder and wonder what people are going to do." Jock raised his head from the book, and looked at her with his big eyes. He had been conscious of her restlessness all along, though he was reading the Heroes which St. Clair had given him. Her little uncomfortable rustle of movement, her frequent gazings from the window, the undercurrent of anxiety and uncertain resolution in the air, had disturbed Jock in spite of himself. He lay and watched her now with his head raised. "I wish," said Jock, "we could get Heré or somebody to come." But Lucy was more insulted than helped by this speech. "What is the use of trying to speak to you about things?" she cried exasperated, "when you know we are real living creatures, and not people in

a book!" And Lucy in her distress cried, which she was not in the habit of doing. Jock raised himself then to his elbow, and looked at her with great interest and sympathy. "Heré can't come to us," he said seriously, "but she was just a lady only bigger than you are. Couldn't you just go yourself?"

"Jock, do you think I should go?" the girl cried. It was like consulting an oracle, and that is what all primitive people like to do.

"Yes," said the little boy, dropping down again satisfied upon his fleecy rug. How could he know anything about it? but Lucy took no time to think. She hastened to her room and put on her hat, and was hurrying along the road to the White House, before she had thought what to say when she got there. It was just twelve o'clock, a moment at which Mrs. Stone was always to be found in her parlour, resting for half an hour in the middle of her labours. Lucy found herself tapping at the parlour door in the fervour of her first resolution. She went in with eyes full of tearful light. Mrs. Stone and Miss Southwood were both in the room. They turned round with great surprise at the sight of her.

"How do you do, Lucy?" Mrs. Stone said very coldly, not even putting out her hand.

"Oh," cried Lucy, full of her generous impulse.

"Why has Mr. St. Clair gone away?"

"I told you," said Miss Southwood, "I told you! the girl doesn't know her own mind."

Mrs. Stone caught her this time by both hands.

"Lucy," she cried, "don't trifle or be a little fool. If this is what you mean, Frank will come back. You may be sure he did not want to go away."

Lucy felt the soft hands which took hold of her, grip like fingers of iron, and felt herself grappled with an eager force she could scarcely withstand. They came round her with anxious faces, seizing hold upon her. For a moment she almost gasped for breath, half suffocated by the closing in around her of this trap into which she had betrayed herself. But the emergency brought back her strength and self-command. "It is not that," she said with poignant distress and shame, though she had no reason to be ashamed. "Oh forgive me, it is not that!"

Mrs. Stone dropped her hands as if they had been hot coals, and turned away. "This is a

moment when I prefer to be alone, Miss Trevor," she said, as she was in the habit of saying to the girls who disturbed her retirement; "if there is anything in which I can serve you, pray say so without any loss of time. I reserve this half hour in the day to myself."

Thus chilled after the red heat of excitement into which she had been raised, Lucy stood trembling scarcely knowing what to say.

"I beg your pardon," she faltered at last, "I came because I was so unhappy about—Mr. St. Clair."

"Lucy; what do you mean?" cried Miss Southwood. "Don't frighten the child, Maria! what *do* you mean? You drive him away, and then you come and tell us you are unhappy. What do you intend us to understand?"

"I wanted to come to you before," said Lucy with great humility, looking at Mrs. Stone, who had turned away from her. "Please listen to me for one moment. You said he was not strong, not able to do all he wished. Mrs. Stone, I have a great deal of money left me by papa to be given away."

Mrs. Stone started to her feet with sudden pas-

sion. "Do you mean to offer him money?" she cried.

This time Lucy did not falter, she confronted even the tremendous authority of Mrs. Stone with a steady though tremulous front, and said: "Yes," very quietly and distinctly, though in a voice that showed emotion. Her old instructress turned on her commanding and imposing, but Lucy did not quail, not even when Mrs. Stone repeated the words, "to offer him money!" in a kind of scream of dismay.

"Maria, let us hear what she means: we don't know what she means; Lucy tell it all to me. She is naturally put out. She cannot bear Frank to go away. Let me hear what you mean, Lucy, let me hear!"

It was Miss Southwood who said this, putting herself between Lucy and her sister. Miss Southwood was not imposing, her anxious little face conciliated and calmed the girl. How comfortable it is, how useful to have a partner, or a brother, or sister, entirely unlike yourself! It is as good as being two persons at once.

"Miss Southwood, papa left me a great deal of money—"

At this the listener nodded her head a great many times with a look of pleased assent: then shook it gently and said. "But you should not think too much of your money, Lucy, my dear."

"—to give away," said Lucy hastily; "he left me this duty above all, to give away to those who needed it. There is a great deal of money, enough for a number of people."

"Oh!" Miss Southwood cried out in a voice which ran up a whole gamut of emotion. She put out her two hands, groping as if she had suddenly become blind. Consternation seized her. "Then you are not—" she said. "Maria, she cannot be such a great heiress after all!"

Mrs. Stone's astonished countenance was slowly turned upon Lucy from over her sister's shoulder. She gazed at the girl with an amazement which struck her dumb. Then she said with an effort, "You meant to offer some of this—charitable fund—to *my* nephew—"

"It is not a charitable fund—it is not charity at all. It was to be given in sums which would make the people independant. Why should you think worse of me than I deserve?" cried Lucy, "it is not my fault. I did not want him to say

—*that*—. I wanted to help him—to offer him—what papa left.”

Here Mrs. Stone burst out furious. “To offer him—my nephew—a man: and you a little chit of a girl, a nobody—help as you call it—alms! charity!”

“Maria—Maria!” said Miss Southwood. “Stop, I tell you. It is all nonsense about alms and charity. Good honest money is not a thing to be turned away from anyone’s door. Lucy, my dear, speak to me. Enough to make people independent! Old Mr. Trevor was a wonderfully sensible old man. How much might that be? You have no right to spoil the boy’s chance. oh! hold your tongue, Maria! Lucy, Lucy, my dear, do tell *me*.”

“I never knew that was what he meant, Miss Southwood,” said Lucy eagerly. “How could I think that he—a Gentleman——” She used such a big capital for the word, that it overbalanced Lucy’s eloquence. “And I only a little chit of a girl,” she added with a tremulous laugh, “it is quite true. But there is this money, and I *have* to give it away. I have no choice. Papa said—— And since he is not strong, and wants

rest. Gentlemen want a great deal more money than women ; but if it was only for a short time, till he got strong—perhaps,” said Lucy faltering and hesitating, “a few thousand pounds—might do?”

The two ladies stood and stared at her confounded—they were struck dumb, both of them. Mrs. Stone’s commanding intellect stood her in as little stead as the good Southernwood’s common sense, upon which she so prided herself. A few thousand pounds?

“And it would make me—so much more happy!” Lucy said. She put her hands together in the fervour of the moment entreating them ; but they were both too entirely taken by surprise, too much overwhelmed by wonder and confusion to speak. Only when Mrs. Stone moved, as if in act to speak, Miss Southwood burst forth in alarm.

“Hold your tongue—hold your tongue,” she said, “Maria!” never in all her life had she so ventured to speak to her dominant sister before.

But when Lucy finally withdrew from this interview, it was with a heart calmed and com-

forted. Mrs. Stone was still stupefied; but her sister had recovered her wits. "You see, Maria, this money is not hers. It is trust money; it is quite a different thing: and she is not such a great heiress after all. Dear Frank, after all, might have been throwing himself away," was what Miss Southwood said. Lucy heard this, as it were, with a corner of her ear, for, at the same time, the bell began to ring at the White House; and it was echoed faintly by another at a distance which she alone understood. This was the bell for Mrs. Ford's early dinner, and Lucy knew that the door had been opened at No. 6 in the Terrace, in order that she, if within hearing, might be summoned home. And that was not an appeal which she ventured to disobey.

This morning's adventure made Lucy's heart much more light for her pleasure in the afternoon. When Raymond and Emmie rode up at two o'clock, he on the new horse which his father had permitted to be bought for this very cause, she sitting very clumsily on a clumsy pony—Lucy and Jock met them with nothing but smiles and brightness. It was not so bright as the day on which the expedition had been

planned. The autumn afternoon had more mist than mellow fruitfulness in it, and there was a cold wind about which shook the leaves in clouds from the trees. And Raymond, for his part, was nervous and uncomfortable. He had a deep and growing sense of what was before him. At a distance, such a piece of work is not so terrible as when seen close at hand. But when time has gone on with inexorable stride to the very verge of a moment which nothing can delay, when the period has come beyond all possibility of escape, then it is not wonderful if the stoutest heart sinks. Raymond had got some advantages already by the mere prospect of this act to come. He had got a great many pleasant hours of leisure, escaping from the office, which he was not fond of: and he had got his horse, which was a very tangible benefit. And in the future, what might he not hope for? Emancipation from the office altogether; a life of wealth and luxury; horses, as many as he could think of; hunting, shooting, everything that heart could desire; a "place" in the country; a "box" somewhere in Scotland; a fine house in town (which moved him less), and the delightful certainty of being

his own master. All these hung upon his power of pleasing Lucy—nothing more than pleasing a girl. Raymond could not but think with a little scorn of the strange incongruity of mortal affairs, which made all these happinesses hang upon the nod of a bit of a girl; but granting this, which he could not help granting, it was, he had frankly acknowledged, a much easier way of getting all the good things of life than that of laboriously striving for them all his life long—to succeed, perhaps, only at the end, when he was no longer able to enjoy them. “And you *are* fond of Lucy,” his mother said. Yes—this too the young man did not deny. He liked Lucy, he “did not mind” the idea of spending his life with her. She was very good-natured, and not bad-looking. He had seen girls he thought prettier; but she was not bad-looking, and always jolly, and not at all “stuck up” about her money; there was not a word to be said against her. And Raymond did not doubt that he would like it well enough were it done. But the doing of it! this was what alarmed him; for, after all, it must be allowed that, more or less, he was doing it in cold blood. And many things

were against him on this special day. The wind was cold, and it was charged with dust, which blew into his eyes, making them red, and into his mouth, making him inarticulate. And Emmie clung to his side on one hand, and Jock on the other. He could not shake himself free of these two; when Lucy and he cantered forward, instead of jogging on together discreetly, these two pests would push on after, Jock catching them up in no time, but Emmie, after lumbering along with tolerable rapidity for thirty yards or so, taking fright and shrieking "Ray! Ray!" Raymond concluded, at last, with a sense of relief, that to say anything on the way there would be impossible. It was a short reprieve for him, and for the moment his spirits rose. He shook his head slightly when they met the party who had gone in the break, and when his mother's anxious eye questioned him. "No opportunity," he whispered as he passed her. The party in the break were covered with dust, and they had laid hold upon all the wraps possible to protect them from the cold. There was shelter in the wood, but still it was cold, and the party was much less gay than the previous one had

been, though Mrs. Rushton herself did all that was possible to "keep it up." Perhaps the party itself was not so well selected as on that previous occasion. It was larger, which, of itself, was a mistake, and Bertie, who did not know the people, yet was too great a personage to be neglected, proved rather in Mrs. Rushton's way. He would stray after Lucy, interfering with Ray's "opportunity," and then would apologize meekly for his "indiscretion," with a keen eye for all that was going on.

"Oh, there is no indiscretion," Mrs. Rushton said; "but young people, you know, young people seeing a great deal of each other, they like to get together."

"I see," Bertie said, making a pretence of withdrawal; but from that moment never took his eyes off Lucy and her attendant. The sky was grey, the wind was cold, the yellow leaves came tumbling down upon their plates, as they ate their out-door meal. Now and then a shivering guest looked up, asking anxiously, "Is that the rain?" They all spoke familiarly of "the rain" as of another guest expected; would it come before they had started on their return? might it

arrive even before the refecton was over? They were all certain that they would not get home without being overtaken by it. And notwithstanding this alarmed expectation of "the rain," the ham and the chickens were gritty with the dust which had blown into the hampers. It was very hard upon poor Mrs. Rushton, everybody said.

"Come up and look at the waterfall," said Ray to Lucy. "No, don't say where we are going, or we shall have a troop after us. That fellow, that Russell, follows everywhere. Thank heaven he is looking the other way. He might know people don't want him for ever at their heels. Ah! this is pleasant," Ray said, with as good a semblance of enthusiasm as he could muster, when he had safely piloted Lucy into a narrow leafy path among the trees. But Lucy did not share his enthusiasm; she shivered a little as they plunged into the shadow, which shut out every gleam of the fitful sun.

"It is a great pity it is so cold," Lucy said.

"A horrid pity," said Ray, with energy; but then he remembered his *rôle*, "for you," he said; "as for me I am very happy—I don't mind the

weather. I could go like this for miles, and never feel the want of the sun."

"I did not know you were so fond of the woods," Lucy said.

"Nor is it the woods I am fond of," said Ray, and his heart began to thump. Now the moment had certainly come. "It is the company I—love."

"Hallo!" cried a voice behind. "I see some one in front of us—who is it? Rushton. Then this must be the way."

"Oh, confound you!" Ray said, between his teeth; and yet it was again a kind of reprieve. The leafy path was soon filled with a train of people, headed by Bertie, who made his way to Lucy's side, when they reached the open space in which was the waterfall.

"Is not this a truly English pleasure?" Bertie said; "why should we all be making ourselves miserable eating cold victuals out of doors when we should so much prefer a snug cutlet at home? and coming to gaze at a little bit of a driblet of water when we all expect floods any moment from the sky?"

"It is a pity," said Lucy, divided between her

natural inclination to assent and consideration for Raymond's feelings, "it is a pity that we have so unfavourable a day."

"But it is always an unfavourable day—in England," Bertie said. He had been "abroad" before he came to Farafield, and he liked to make this fact known.

"I have never been anywhere but in England," said Lucy regretfully.

"Nor I," said Ray defiant.

"Nor I," said some one else with a touch of scorn.

"Authors always travel about so much, don't they?" cried an *ingénue* in a whisper which was full of awe; and this turned the laugh against Bertie. He grew red in spite of himself, and cast a vengeful glance at the young woman in question.

"Ah, you should have seen the day we had at Versailles; such lawns, and terraces, such great trees against the bluest, brightest sky. Miss Trevor, do you know I think you should not venture to ride home."

"Why?" said Ray, with restrained fury, thrusting himself between them.

"I did not suppose it mattered for you, Rushton; but Miss Trevor will get drenched. There, I felt a drop already."

They all looked anxiously at the grey sky. "I should not like Jock to get wet," said Lucy, "I do not mind for myself."

"Come round to this side, you will see the fall better," Raymond said; and then he added, "come along, come along this short way. Let us give that fellow the slip. It is not the rain he is thinking of, but to spoil my pleasure."

"Versailles is something like Windsor, is it not? have you been there lately, Mr. Russell? Oh, we shall soon know. I can always tell when you gifted people have been travelling by your next book," said one of the ladies.

"Suppose we follow Rushton," said Bertie. "He knows all the best points of view."

And once more the train was at Ray's heels. "I think I do feel the rain now," Raymond cried, "and listen, wasn't that thunder? It would not be wise to be caught in a thunderstorm here. Russell, look after Mrs. Chumley, and make for the open; I will get Miss Trevor round this way."

"Thunder!" the ladies cried, alarmed, and there was a rush towards an open space.

"Nonsense," cried Bertie, "there is no thunder," but it was he himself who had prophesied the rain, and they put no faith in him. As for Lucy, she served Raymond's purpose involuntarily by speeding along the nearest opening.

"Jock is always frightened, I must see after him," she cried. Raymond thought she did it for his special advantage, and his heart rose; yet sank too, for now it was certain that the moment had come.

"Stop," he said, panting after her, "it is all right, there is no hurry, I did not mean it. Did you ever see thunder out of such a sky."

"But it was you who said it," Lucy cried.

"Don't you know why I said it? To get rid of those tiresome people; I have never had time to say a word to you all the day."

"Then don't you really think it will rain?" Lucy said doubtfully, looking at the sky. She was much more occupied with this subject than with his wish to say something to her. "Perhaps it would be best to leave the horses, and drive home if there is room?" she said.

"I wish I were as sure of something else as that it will not rain. Stay a little, don't be in such a hurry," said Ray. "Ah, if you only knew how I want to speak to you; but either some one comes, or—I funk it. I am more afraid of you than of the Queen."

"Afraid of—me!" Lucy laughed a little; but looked at him, and grew nervous in spite of herself. "Don't you think we had better wait for the others?" she said.

"I have funk'd it fifty times; but it does not get any easier by being put off—for if you were to say you would have nothing to do with me I don't know what would happen," said Ray. He spoke with real alarm and horror, for indeed he did know something that would inevitably happen. The cutting short of all his pleasures, the downfall of a hundred hopes. "We have seen a great deal of each other since you came home, and we have got on very well."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, "very well! I think I hear them coming this way."

"No, they are not likely to come this way. I have always got on well with you, I don't know how it is; often I can't get on with ladies; but

you are always so jolly, you are so good-tempered; I don't know any one half so nice," said the youth, growing red. "I am not a hand at compliments, and I never was what you call a ladies' man," he continued, floundering and feeling that he had made a mistake in thus involving himself in so many words. "Look here, I think you are the very nicest girl I ever met in my life."

"Oh, no," Lucy said, growing graver and more grave, "I am sure you are making a mistake."

"Not the least a mistake—I like everything about you," said Raymond, astonished at his own fervour and sincerity. "You are always so jolly; and we have known each other all our lives, when we were quite babies, don't you remember? I always called you Lucy then. Lucy—our people seem to think that you and I—don't you think? I do believe we should get on just as well together all our lives, if you were willing to try."

"Oh, Mr. Raymond," cried Lucy distressed, "why, why should you talk to me like this? We are good friends, and let us stay good friends."

I am sure you don't in your heart want anything more."

"But I do," cried Raymond piqued. "You think I am too young, but I am not so very young; many a fellow is married before he is my age. Why shouldn't I want a wife as well as the others? I do;—but Lucy, there is no wife I care for but you."

"Mr. Raymond, we must make haste or we shall be caught in the rain."

"What do I care if we are caught in the rain? But there is not going to be any rain, it was only to get rid of the others," Raymond said breathless; and then he added with almost tragical pleading. "It would be better for me that we should be swept away by the rain than that you should not give me an answer." He put his hand upon her sleeve. "Lucy, is it possible that you do not like me?" he said.

"I like you very well," cried Lucy with tears in her eyes, "but oh, why should you talk to me like this? Why should you spoil everything? You will think after this that we never can be friends any more."

"Then you will not?" said Ray. He was a

great deal more disappointed than he had thought he could be, and even the satisfaction of having got it over did not console him. His face lengthened more and more, as he stood opposite to her, barring her passage, leaning against the stem of a tree. "I never thought you would be so hard upon a fellow. I never thought," said Raymond, his lip quivering, "that, after all, you would throw me off at the last."

"I am not throwing you off at the last—it has always been the same," said Lucy; "oh, could not you have left me alone?" she cried half piteous, half indignant. She walked straight forward, passing him, and he did not any longer attempt to bar the way. He followed with his head drooping, his arms hanging limp by his side, the very image of defeat and discomfiture. Poor Ray! he could have cried when he thought of all he had lost, of all he was losing: and yet there began to gleam over his mind a faint reflection of content in that it was over. This at least was a thing which nobody could expect him to repeat any more.

CHAPTER X.

DISCOMFITURE.

THE troubles of this interesting picnic were not yet over ; there was tea to be made over an impromptu fire from a gipsy kettle, which the young people generally thought one of the most amusing performances of all. And indeed they were all glad of the warmth of the tea, and anxious to get as near as they could to the comforting blaze of the fire, notwithstanding the smoke which made their eyes smart. Mrs. Rushton was busily engaged over this, when Lucy and Ray, one following the other, made their appearance in the centre of the proceedings ; the others were dropping in from different sides, and in the important operation of making the tea Mrs. Rushton did not perceive the very

evident symptoms of what had happened. It was only when a gleam of firelight lighted up the group and showed her son, standing listless and cast-down, full in the way of the smoke, and receiving it as he might have received the fire of an enemy, that the catastrophe became evident to her. She gave him a hasty glance, half furious, half pitiful. Was it all over? Poor Mrs. Rush-ton! She was obliged to stand there over the fire boiling her kettle, now and then getting a gust of smoke in her face, and obliged to laugh at it, appealed to on all sides, and obliged to smile and reply, obliged to make believe that her whole soul was absorbed in her tea-making, and in the monotonous question, who took sugar, and who did not? while all the while her mind was distracted with anxiety and full of a hundred questions. Talk of psychometric facts! If Mr. Galton would measure the thoughts of a poor lady, who while she puts the tea in her teapot, and inquires audibly with a sweet smile whether Mrs. Price takes sugar, has all at once six ideas presented to her consciousness: 1st. The discomfiture of Ray; 2nd. The alienation of Lucy; 3rd. Her husband's fury at all these unnecessary

expenses, which he had never countenanced; 4th. The horse which would have to be sold again, probably at a loss, having failed like Ray; 5th. How to get all her party home, it being evident that Ray and Lucy would not ride together as they came; and 6th: with a poignant sting that embittered all the rest, of the exultation of her friends and rivals in witnessing her failure; If Mr. Galton could do that, weighing the weight of each, and explaining how they could come together, yet every one keep distinct, it would indeed be worth a scientific philosopher's while. But Mrs. Rushton, it is to be feared, would have scoffed at Mr. Galton. She stood at the stake, with the smoke in her face, and smiled like a martyr. "Sugar? I thought so, but so many people don't take it. I lose my head altogether," cried the poor lady. "Ray, come here, make haste and hand Mrs. Price her tea." Even when Ray did come close to her, however, she could not, encircled as she was, ask him any questions. She looked at him, that was enough: and he in reply slightly, imperceptibly, shook his head. Good heavens! and there was the girl standing quite unmoved, talking to somebody, after she

had driven a whole family to despair! What could girls be made of, Mrs. Rushton thought?

And just at the moment when this fire of suspense, yet certainty, was burning in her heart, lo, the heavens were opened, and a shower of rain came pouring down, dispersing the company, pattering among the trees. Mrs. Rushton was like the captain of a shipwrecked ship, she was the last to leave the post of danger. Though the hissing of the shower forced up a black and heavy cloud of smoke which nearly choked her, she kept her place and shrieked out directions to the others. "The Abbey ruins, the west wing," she cried; there was shelter to be found there. And now it was that Raymond showed how much filial affection was left in him. He snatched a waterproof cloak from the heap and put it round his mother. "You want shelter as much as anyone," he cried. "Oh, Ray!" exclaimed the poor lady as they hurried along together, the last of all the scudding figures under umbrellas and every kind of improvised shelter. She held his arm tight, and he clung closely to her side. There was no more said between them, as they struggled along under the blinding rain. They

had both been extinguished, their fires put out, their hopes brought to an end.

As for Lucy, she shrank away among the crowd, and tried to hide herself from Mrs. Rushton's eyes. She was not unconcerned, poor girl. Even the little glimmer of indignation which had woke in her was quenched in her sorrow for the trouble and disappointment which she seemed to bring to everybody. Only this morning she had trembled before Mrs. Stone, and now it was these other people who had been so kind to her, who had taken so much pains to please her, whom she had made unhappy. What could Lucy do? She did not want any of these men to come into her life. She liked them well enough in their own place; but why should she marry them? This she murmured feebly in self-justification—but her heart was very heavy; and she could not offer any compensation to Ray. He was not poor, he did not come into the range of the will. She gathered her riding skirt up about her and ran to the shelter of the Abbey walls when the shower came on, little Jock running by her side. They had nearly reached that refuge when Jock stumbled over a stone and fell, crying out to her

for help. Almost before Lucy could stop, however, help came from another quarter. It was Bertie Russell who picked the little fellow up, and carried him safely into the west wing of the abbey, where the walls were still covered by a roof. "He is not hurt," Bertie said, "and here is a dry corner. Why did you run away, Miss Trevor? I followed you everywhere, for I saw that there was annoyance in store for you." "Oh, no," said Lucy faintly; but it was consolatory to find a companion who would not blame her. He lifted Jock up into a window-seat, and he found her something to sit down upon and take breath, and then he arranged a place for himself between them, leaning against the wall.

"Did you get wet?" Bertie said; "after this you will not think of riding home? I have got a coat which will cover Jock and you; what made them think of a picnic to-day? Picnics are always dangerous in this climate, but in October!—Jock, little fellow, take off your jacket, it is wet, and put on this coat of mine."

"But you will want it yourself," said Lucy, very grateful. Bertie bore the aspect of an old friend, and the people at Farafeld, though she

had lived in Farafield all her life, were comparative strangers to her. She was moved to laugh when Jock appeared in the coat, which was so much too large for him, a funny little figure, his big eyes looking out from the collar that came over his ears, but comfortable, and easy, and dry. "He has been wrapped in my coat before now," Bertie said. "Don't you remember, Jock, on the Heath when I had to carry you home? Mary expects to have him back, Miss Trevor, when you return to town. I have not told you," continued Bertie, raising his voice, "how Mrs. Berry-Montagu has taken me up, she who nearly made an end of me by that review? and even old Lady Betsinda has smiled upon me; oh, I must tell you about your old friends."

Their dry corner was by this time shared by a number of the other guests, who were watching the sky through the great hole of a ruined window, and had nothing to talk about except the chances of the weather, whether "it would leave off," whether there was any chance of getting home without a wetting, and sundry doubts and questions of the same kind. In the midst of these depressed and shivering people who

had nothing to amuse them, it was fine to talk of Lady Betsinda and other names known in the higher society of Mayfair; and Bertie was not indifferent to this, whatever Lucy's sentiments might be.

"I ran over to Homburg for a few weeks," Bertie said. "Everybody was there. I saw Lady Randolph, who was very kind to me of course. She is always kind. We talked of you constantly, I need not tell you. But you should have seen Lady Betsinda in the morning taking the waters, without her lace, without her satin, a wonderful little old mummy swathed in folds of flannel. Can you imagine Lady Betsinda without her lace?" said Bertie, delighted with the effect he was producing. Mrs. Price and the rest had been caught in the full vacancy of their discussion about the rain. To hear of a Lady Betsinda was always interesting. They edged half consciously a little nearer, and stopped their conjectures in respect to the storm.

"I hear it is worth more than all the rest of her ladyship's little property," Bertie said. "I don't pretend to be a connoisseur, but I am told she has some very fine Point d'Alençon which

has never been equalled. Poor old Lady Betsinda ! her lace is what she stands upon. The Duchess, they say, declares everywhere that the Point d'Alençon is an heir-loom, and that Lady Betsinda has no right to it ; but if she were separated from her lace I think she would die."

"It is very dirty," said Lucy with simplicity. She was not sure that she liked him to call the attention of the others by this talk which everybody could hear, but she was glad to escape from the troublesome circumstances of the moment.

"Dirty !" he said repeating her words in his higher tones. "What is lace if it is not dirty ? you might say the same of the poor old woman herself perhaps : but a Duke's daughter is always a Duke's daughter, Miss Trevor, and point is always point. And the more blood you have, and the more lace you have, the more candid you feel yourself entitled to be about your flannel. A fine lady can always make a fright of herself with composure. She used to hold out a grimy finger to me, and ask after you."

"After me ?" Lucy said shrinking. If he would but speak lower, or if she could but steal away ! Everybody was listening now, even Mrs. Rushton,

who had just come in shaking the rain off her bonnet. She had found Lucy out the moment she entered with that keen gaze of displeasure which is keener than anything but love.

“Yes,” said Bertie still rising his voice. Then he bent towards her, and continued the conversation in a not-inaudible whisper. “This is not for everybody’s ears,” he said. “She asked me always, ‘How is little Miss Angel—the Angel of Hope.’”

A vivid colour covered Lucy’s face. She was looking towards Mrs. Rushton, and who could doubt that Raymond’s mother saw the flush and put her own interpretation upon it? Of this Lucy did not think, but she was annoyed and disconcerted beyond measure. She drew away as far as possible among the little group around them. Had she not forgotten all this, put it out of her mind? Was there nobody whom she could trust? She shrank from the old friend with whom she had been so glad to take refuge: after all he was not an old friend: and was there not, far or near, any one person whom she could trust?

When, however, the carriages came, and the big break, into which Lucy and Emmie and little

Jock had to be crowded, since the weather was too broken to make it possible that they could ride home. Bertie managed to get the place next her there, and engrossed her the whole way. He held an umbrella over her head when the rain came down again, he busied himself officiously in putting her cloak round her, he addressed all his conversation to her, talking of Lady Randolph, and of the people whom they two alone knew. Sometimes she was interested, sometimes amused by his talk, but always disturbed and troubled by its exclusiveness and absorbing character; and she did not know how to free herself from it. The rest of the party grew tired, and cross, and silent, but Bertie never failed. It was he who jumped down at the gate of the Terrace, and handed her down from amid all the limp and draggled figures of the disappointed merry-makers. They were all too wet to make anything possible but the speediest return to their homes, notwithstanding the pretty supper-table all shining with flowers and lights which awaited them in the big house in the Market-place, and at which the Rushtons tired and disappointed, and drenched, had to sit down alone. Bertie was the

only cheerful voice which said good night. He attended her to her door with unwearying devotion. Raymond, who had insisted upon riding after the carriages, passed by all wet and dismal, as the door opened. He put his hand to his hat with a morose and stiff salutation. With the water streaming from the brim of that soaked hat, he passed by stiffly like a figure of despair. And Bertie laughed. "It has been a dismal expedition, but a most delightful day. There is nothing I love like the rain," he said.

CHAPTER XI.

PHILIP'S DECISION.

SOME one else got down from the break after Lucy had been carefully handed out by Bertie, and followed her silently in the rain and dark to the door. He went in after her, with a passing nod of good night to Bertie, who was somewhat discomfited when he turned round and almost stumbled upon the dark figure of Lucy's cousin, who went in after her with the ease of relationship without any preliminaries. Bertie was discomfited by this apparition, and felt that a cousin was of all things in the world the most inconvenient at this special moment. But he could do nothing but retire when the door was closed, and return to his sister, who was waiting for him. He could not bid Philip be-

gone, or forbid him to interfere. Philip had a right, whereas Bertie had none. But he went away reluctantly, much disposed to grumble at Katie, who awaited him very quietly at the corner of the road. Katie's heart was not so light as usual, any more than her brother's. Why did Mr. Rainy leave her without a word when, following Bertie and Lucy, he had helped her out of the crowded carriage? They had been together almost all the day, and Katie had not minded the rain; why had he left her now, so hastily, without anything but a good night, instead of taking the opportunity of going with her to the White House, as he had done before? Two heads under one umbrella can sometimes make even the mud and wet of a dark road supportable, and Katie had expected this termination to the day with a little quickening of her heart. But he had put up his umbrella over her, and had left her, following her brother with troubled haste, leaving Katie wounded and disappointed, and a little angry. It was not even civil, she said to herself, and one or two hot tears came to her eyes in the darkness. When Bertie joined her, she said nothing, nor did he. They crossed

the road and stumbled through the mud and darkness to the White House, where Katie did not expect a very cheerful reception ; for she knew, having her faculties sharpened by regard for her brother's interest, that something had happened to St. Clair, who had gone so abruptly away.

"What does Rainy want going in there at this time of night?" Bertie said, as they slid along the muddy way.

"How should I know?" Katie said sharply. "I am not Mr. Rainy's keeper."

Poor girl, she did not mean to be disagreeable ; but it was hard to be deserted, and then have her attention thus called to the desertion.

"Is he after Lucy, too?" said her brother. Oh, how blind men are ! not to see that if he were after Lucy he was guilty of the most shameful deceit to another.

"Oh, I suppose you are all after Lucy ! she turns all your heads ;" Katie cried, with a harsh laugh. Money ! that was the only thing they thought of ; and what a fool she had been to think that it was possible that anybody could care for her with Lucy in the way !

As for Philip he went in, following Lucy, with scarcely a word to anyone. Mrs. Ford came out as usual disposed to scold, but she stopped when she saw Philip behind. "I have something to say to Lucy," he said, passing her with a nod, and following Lucy upstairs. This made Mrs. Ford forget that bedtime was approaching, and that it was full time to bolt and bar all the windows. She went into her parlour and sat down, and listened with all the breathless awe that surrounds a great event. What could he be going to say? what but the one thing that would finish all doubt? Mrs. Ford had always been a partizan of Philip. And though she fully valued Lucy's fortune, it did not occur to her that a girl could refuse "a good offer," for no reason at all. That girls do still refuse "good offers," in the very face of the statistics which point out to them the excess of womankind and unlikelihood of marriage, is one of those contradictions of human nature which puzzle the philosopher. Mrs. Ford thought that it was Lucy's first experience of the kind, and though she was anxious she cannot be said to have had much fear. She

put out her gas, all but one light, and waited, alive to every sound.

It would be hard to say why it was that Philip Rainy followed Lucy home. He had perceived his mistake the last time they had been together, and the folly of the constant watch which he had kept upon her; it had done him harm, he felt—it had made him “lose caste,” which was the most dreadful penalty he could think of. And the result of this conviction was that on being asked late, and he felt only on Lucy’s account, to this second party he had made up his mind that this time he would possess his soul in silence. The thought that Lucy’s money might go to make some blockhead happy, some fool who had nothing to do with the Rainys, was no less intolerable to him than ever; but he began to feel that he could not prevent this by interfering with Lucy’s amusements, and that on the other hand he lost friends so far as he was himself concerned. Therefore he had carefully kept away from Lucy during the whole day; and—what else was there to do? he fell immediately into the still more serious Charybdis which balanced this Scylla—that is to say he found himself involun-

tarily, almost unwillingly, by the side of Katie Russell. Not much had been seen of them all the day : they had not minded the threatening of the rain. When the party was starting to go away, they had been found at the very last under the same umbrella, leisurely making their way under the thickest of the trees, and keeping the whole party waiting. Between that moment and the arrival of the break at the Terrace, Philip could not have given a very clear account of what had happened. It had been a kind of troubled elysium, a happiness darkened only by the thought which would occur now and then that it was an unlawful pleasure, and out of the question. He had no right to be happy—at least in that way. What he ought to have done would have been to make himself useful to everybody, to please the givers of the feast, and to show himself the popular useful young man, worthy of all confidence, which he had been hitherto believed to be. This—or else to secure Lucy the heiress-cousin, whom he had the best right to please—to carry her off triumphantly before everybody's eyes, and to show all the small great people, who patronized him, how entirely superior he was to their patronage. But this

latter was a step that it would only have been safe to take had he been entirely assured of its success: and he was not at all assured of its success either on one side or the other. Lucy did not want him, and, he did not want Lucy. This was the fact, he felt; it was a fact that filled him with vexation unspeakable. Why should not he want Lucy? why should he want somebody quite different—a little girl without a sixpence, without interest or connection? Could anything be so perverse, so disappointing! but he could not explain or analyze it. He was forced to confess the fact, and that was all. He did not want Lucy; the question remained should he compel himself to like her, and after that compel her to like him, notwithstanding this double indifference? The titter with which his late appearance had been received when he returned to the party, and when Katie, all shamefaced and blushing had been helped into the over-crowded carriage, amid smiles, yet general impatience, for the rain was coming down, and everybody was anxious to get home—had shown him how far astray from the path of wisdom he had gone. Perhaps this conviction would have worn off had

he been by Katie's side crowded up into a corner, and feeling himself enveloped in that atmosphere of her which confused all his faculties with happiness, whenever he was with her, yet was not capable of being explained. But Philip was thrust into an already too large cluster of men on the box, and, crowded there amid the dripping of the umbrellas, had time to turn over in his mind many a troublesome thought. Whither was he going? what had he been doing? was he mad altogether to forget all his interests, to cast prudence behind him and laugh at all that was necessary in his circumstances? The bitter predominated over the sweet as he chewed the cud of thought, seated on an inch of space among the bags and hampers, and umbrellas of other men, with the confused babble of the break behind him, which was all one mass of damp creatures, under a broken firmament of umbrellas, where a few kept up a spasmodic fire of gloomy gaiety, while all the rest were wrapped in still more gloomy silence. He heard Katie's voice now and then among the others, and was partially wounded by the sound of it; then took himself to task and did his best to persuade himself that he

was glad she could talk and get some pleasure out of it, and had not, like himself, dropped into a nether-world of gloom from that foolish Paradise in which they had lost themselves. Much better if she did not care ! he said to himself, with a bitter smile, and this thought helped to bring out and increase his general sense of discomfiture. The whole business must be put a stop to, he said, to himself, with angry energy. And this it was which, when the break stopped to set down Lucy, suggested to him the step he had now taken. Katie was making her way out between the knees of the other passengers, from the place at the upper end of the carriage, where she had been all but suffocated, when Philip jumped down. He caught, by the light of the lamp, a grin on the countenance of the man who was helping her out, as he said, "Oh, here's Rainy." But for that he would most likely have gone off with her to the White House, and snatched a few moments of fearful joy in the teeth of his own resolution. But that grin drove him wild. He put up his umbrella over her head, and left her abruptly. "I must see Lucy to-night," he said, leaving her there waiting for her brother.

It was brutal, he felt, after all that had passed ; but what, unless he wanted to compromise himself utterly, what could he do ? He took no time to think, as he followed his cousin and her companion through the rain.

But when he had followed Lucy silently upstairs, he did not quite know what to do or say next. Lucy stopped on her way to her room to change her habit, and looked round upon him with surprise. "Is it you, Philip?" she asked, wondering, then added, "I am glad to see you, I have scarcely seen you all day ;" and led the way into the pink drawing-room. Philip sat down as he was told, but he did not know why he had come there, or what he wanted to say.

"The party—has been rather spoilt by the rain," she said.

"I suppose so," he answered, vaguely. "Did you like it ? Sometimes one does not mind the rain."

"I minded it very much," said Lucy, with a sigh ; then, feeling that she was likely to commit herself if she pursued this subject, she added, "I am rather glad the time is over for these

parties; they are—a trouble. The first one is pleasant—the others—”

Then she paused, and Philip's mind went back to the first one, and to this which was just over. He had not enjoyed the first, except the end of it, when he took Katie home. And this he had enjoyed, but not the end. His imagination escaped from the present scene, and he seemed to see Katie going along the muddy road, under his umbrella, but without him. What could she think? that he had abandoned her? or would she care whether he abandoned her or not?

“That depends,” said Philip, oracularly, and, like Lucy, with a sigh; though the sigh was from a different cause. Then he looked at her across the table. She had not seated herself, but stood in her habit, looking taller and more graceful than usual, more high-bred too; for the girls whom Philip was in the habit of meeting did not generally indulge in such an expensive exercise as that of riding. He looked at her with a sort of spectator air, as though balancing her claims against those of the others. “I should not wonder,” he said, “if you would like your sea-

son at Farafield to be over altogether, and to be free to go back to your fine friends."

"Why should you say my fine friends—" said Lucy, with gentle indignation: and then more softly, but also with a sigh, for she had been left for a long time without any news of one at least of them, whom she began to think her only real friend—"but indeed you are right, and I should be very glad to get back—all was so quiet there."

"So quiet! If you are not quiet in Farafield, where should you know tranquillity?" cried Philip, with a little mock laugh. He felt that she must intend this for a joke, and in his present temper it seemed to him a very bad joke.

Lucy looked at him with a momentary inquiry in her eyes—a question which had a great deal of wistfulness and anxiety in it. Could she tell her troubles to him? He was her kinsman—who so well qualified to advise her? But then she shook her head, and turned away from him with an impatient sigh.

"What is it you mean?" he said, with some excitement. His mind was in a turmoil, which he could not tell how to still. He felt himself at

the mercy of his impulses, not knowing what he might be made to do in the next five minutes. It was the merest "toss-up" what he would do. Never had he felt himself so entirely irresponsible, so without independant meaning, so ready to be hurried in any direction. He did not feel in him the least spark of love for Lucy. He felt impatient with her, wroth with all the world for making so much of her, indignant that she should be preferred to—others. But with all that he did not know what he might find himself saying to her next moment. The only thing was that it would not be his doing, it would be the force of the current of Fate, on which he felt himself whirling along—to be tossed over the rapids or dashed against the rocks, he did not know how or when. "What do you mean?" he repeated; "you look mysterious, as if you had something to tell—what is it. I have seen nothing of you the whole day. We have been nominally at the same party, and we are cousins, though you don't seem to remember it much, and we once were friends; but I have scarcely seen you. You have been absorbed by other attractions, other companions."

“ Philip ! ” said Lucy faltering and growing pale. Was he going to desert her too ?

“ Yes ! ” he said, “ it is quite true. I am one that it might have been supposed likely you would turn to. Natural feeling should have made you turn to me. I have always tried to stand by you ; and you have got what would have enriched the whole family—all to yourself. Nature pointed to me as your nearest ; and yet you have never,” he said, pausing to give additional bitterness to his words, and feeling himself caught in an eddy, and whirling round in that violent stream without any power of his own, “ never shown the slightest inclination to turn to, or to cling to, me.”

“ Indeed, indeed, Philip—” Lucy began.

“ Why should you say indeed, indeed ? What is indeed, indeed ? Just what I tell you. You have never singled me out, whoever might be your favourite. All your family have been put at a disadvantage for you ; but you never singled me out, never showed me any preference—which would have been the best way of setting things right.”

There was a look of alarm on Lucy’s face. “ If

it is my money, Philip, I wish you had the half of it, or the whole of it," she said. "I wish I could put it all away, and stand free."

"It is not your money," he said, "it is your——" And here he stopped short, and looked at her with staring troubled eyes. The eddy had nearly whirled him away, when he made a grasp at the bank, and felt himself, all at once, to recover some mastery of his movements. He did not know very well what he had been going to say: "your——" what? love? It was not love surely. Not such a profanation as that. He looked at her with a sudden suspicious threatening pause. Then he burst again into a harsh laugh. "What was I going to say—I don't know what I was going to say?"

"What is the matter with you, Philip? I am your friend and your cousin; there is something wrong—tell me what it is." Lucy came up to him full of earnest sympathy, and put her hand on his shoulder, and looked with hectic anxiety in his face. "Tell me what it is," she said, with a soft tone of entreaty. "I am as good as your sister, Philip. If I could not do anything else, I could be sorry for you at least."

He looked up at her with the strangest staring look, feeling his head go round and round; and then he gave another loud sudden laugh, which alarmed her more. "I'll tell you," he said, "yes! I'll tell you. It is the best thing I can do. I was going—to make love to you, Lucy—love!—for your money."

She patted him softly on the shoulder, soothing him as if he had been a child confessing a fault. "No, no, Philip, no. I am sure you were not thinking of anything so unkind."

"Lucy!" he said, seizing her hand, the other hand. She never even removed the one which lay softly, soothing him, on his shoulder. "You are a good girl. You don't deserve to have a set of mean hounds round you as we all are. And yet—there are times when I feel as if I could not endure to see you give your fortune, the great Rainy fortune, to some—other fellow. There! that is the truth."

"Poor Philip!" she said, shaking her head, and still moving her hand softly on his shoulder with a little consolatory movement, calming him down. Then she added with a smile, "You need not be in any trouble for that, for I am not

going to give it to any—fellow. I never can by the will.”

“I don’t put any trust in that,” he said, “no one would put any trust in that. You will marry, of course, and then—it will be as Providence ordains, or your husband. He will take the command of it, and it will be his, whatever you may think now.”

“I do not think so,” said Lucy with a smile, “and, besides, there is no such person. You need not trouble yourself about that.”

Then Philip wrung her hand again, looking up at her in such deadly earnest, that it took from him all sense of humour. “Lucy, if I could have fallen in love with you, and you with me, that would have been the best thing of all,” he said.

“But you see it has not happened, Philip; it is not our fault.”

“No, I suppose not,” he said gloomily with a sigh, “it is not my fault. I have tried my best; but things were too many for me.” Here he got up, shaking off unceremoniously Lucy’s hand. “Good night! you must be damp in your habit, and I’ve got wet feet,” he said.

Mrs. Ford lay in wait for him as he came downstairs, but he only said a hasty good-night to her as he went away. His feet were wet, and he realised the possibility of taking cold, which would be very awkward now that the duties of the school in Kent's Lane had recommenced. Nevertheless, instead of going home, he crossed the road, and went stumbling among the mud towards the White House. What did he want there? he had a dim recollection of his umbrella, but it was not his umbrella he wanted. And Philip was fortunate, though, perhaps, he did not deserve it. A light flashed suddenly out from the White House as he reached the door. Bertie had taken his sister back, and had gone in, where he met but a poor reception. And Katie had come out to the door to see her brother depart. When she saw the other figure appearing in the gleam of light from the door, she gave a little shriek of mingled pleasure and malice. "It is Mr. Rainy come for his umbrella! Here it is!" she said, diving into the hall and re-appearing with the article in question, all wet and shining. She held it out to him, with a laugh in which there was a good deal of excite-

ment, for Katie had not been without her share in the agitations of the evening. "Here is your umbrella, Mr. Rainy. I was so glad to have it, and it is so good of you to save me the trouble of sending it back." Philip stepped close up to the door, close to her as she stood on the threshold. "It was not for the umbrella I came," he said, as he took it from her. "I came only to look at the house you were in." It was a strange place to make a declaration, with Bertie within hearing, the dark and humid night on one side, the blazing unsympathetic light of the hall on the other. But he was excited too, and it seemed a necessity upon him to commit himself, to go beyond the region of prudence, the place from which he could draw back. Katie grew suddenly pale, then blushed crimson, and drew away from the door, with a wavering hesitating consent. "That was not much worth the while," she said hurriedly. "Are you coming my way, Rainy," said Bertie, who did not understand anything about it, and had his head full of other thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT THE LADIES SAID.

WHEN Lucy awoke next morning, a world of cares and troubles seemed to surround her bed. The previous day seemed nothing but a long embroglio of discomforts one after the other. First her interview with Mrs. Stone, then Raymond's efforts to secure her attention, which she had not understood at the time, but which, as she looked back upon them, formed into a consistent pursuit of her which Lucy could not now believe herself to have been quite unconscious of. It seemed to her now that she had been hunted, and had managed to get away again and again, only to fall, at last, into the snare from which she finally escaped only with another hurt and wound. Poor Ray's version of this would

have been a very different one. He would have said that it was he who had been wounded and beaten, and that Lucy had remained mistress of the field. But that was not her own sensation. She had been hunted, and she had escaped, but with the loss of another friend. with the sense of having brought pain and disturbance to another set of people, who had been kind to her, and narrowed the world round about her. It seemed to Lucy, when she opened her eyes that morning, as if the skies were getting narrower and narrower, the circle of the universe closing in. It was becoming like the terrible prison in the story, which got less and less every day, till it crushed the unhappy inhabitant within. The White House first, and now the Rushtons. Where was she to turn for safety?

When she went downstairs, she found Mrs. Ford much disposed to improve the occasion, and preach a sermon upon the discomforts of pleasure-seeking.

“I hope it will teach her a lesson,” said Mrs. Ford, “a woman at that age with pleasure never out of her head. Oh! I could forgive a child like you. You have not learned yet what vanity and

vexation of spirit it all is ; but a woman with children grown up, I wonder she is not ashamed of herself ! and a fine company of draggle-tails you must have been when you came home. If I were Mr. Rushton, I should give my wife a piece of my mind. I would not allow, nor countenance, for a moment, such silly goings on."

"Mrs. Rushton did not do it for herself, Aunt Ford."

"Oh, don't tell me ! Do you suppose she'd do it, if she didn't like it ? Do you ever catch *me* at that sort of folly ? I almost wished you to get something that would disgust you with such nonsense ; but nothing will convince you, Lucy, nothing will make you see that it is your money, and only your money—"

How glad Lucy was when the meal was over, and she could escape upstairs ! how thankful to have that pink drawing-room to take refuge in, though it was not a lovely place ! Jock came with her, clinging to her hand. Jock's eyes were bigger than ever as he raised them to his sister's face, and she, on her part, clung to him too, little though he was. She held Jock close to her, and gave him a tremulous kiss when they

entered that lonely little domain in which they spent so much of their lives. When the door was closed and everything shut out, even the voices of the household which lived for them, yet had nothing to do with them, this room represented the world to Lucy and Jock. Even with the household, they had no special tie—not even a servant attached to them, as they might have had if they had been brought up like the children of the rich. But they had been just so brought up that even the consolation of a kind nurse, an attendant of years, was denied to them, in the dismal isolation of that class which is too little raised above its servants to venture to trust them—which dares not to love its inferiors, because they are so very little inferior, yet will not bow to anything as above itself. They had nobody accordingly. Lucy's maid even had been sent away. Jock had no old nurse to take refuge with; they clung together, the most forlorn young pair. "Is it your money, and only your money," said the little boy, "as Auntie Ford says?"

"Oh Jock, how can I tell? I wish you and I had a little cottage somewhere in a wood, or on

an island, and could go far away, and never see any one any more !”

And Lucy cried ; her spirit was broken, her loneliness seemed to seize upon her all at once, and the sense that she had no one to fall back upon, nobody to whom her money was not the inducement. This was an idea which in her simplicity she had never conceived before. She had thought a great deal of her money, and perhaps she had scarcely formed any new acquaintances without asking herself whether they wanted her help, whether it would be possible to place them upon the privileged list. It had been her favourite notion, the thing that occupied her mind most ; but yet Lucy thinking so much of her money, never thought that it was because of her money that people were kind to her. It had seemed so natural, she was so grateful, and her heart was so open to all that made a claim upon it. And she and Jock were so lonely, so entirely thrown upon the charity of those around them. Therefore she had never thought of her wealth as affecting anyone’s opinion of herself. Had any of her friends asked for a share of it, represented themselves or others as in

need of it, Lucy would have listened to them with delight, would have given with both hands and a joyful heart, at once gratifying herself and doing her duty according to her father's instructions. But that her friends should seek her because she was rich, and that one man after another should startle her youth with proposals of marriage because she was rich—this was an idea that had never entered into Lucy's mind before. "Your money, and only your money:" the words seemed to ring in her ears, and when Jock asked wondering if this were true, she could not make him any reply: oh, how could she tell? oh, that she had wings like a dove, that she might fly away, and hide herself and be at rest! and then she cried. What more could a girl so young and innocent do?

Jock stood by her side, by her knee, and watched her with large serious eyes, which seemed to widen and widen with the strain and dilation of tears; but he would not cry with Lucy. He said slowly in a voice which it took him a great deal of trouble to keep steady. "I do not think that Sir Tom——"

"Oh," cried Lucy, putting him away from her

with a burst of still warmer tears. "Sir Tom! You don't know, Jock. Sir Tom is unkind too."

Jock looked at her, swallowing all his unshed tears with an effort; he looked at her with that scorn which so often fills the mind of a child, to see the want of perception which distinguishes its elders. "It is you that don't know," said Jock. He would not argue the question. He left her, shaking as it might be the dust off his feet, and took the Heroes from the table, and threw himself down on his favourite rug. He would not condescend to argue. But after he had read a dozen pages, he paused and raised himself upon his elbows, and looked at her with fine contempt. "You!" he said, "you wouldn't have known the gods if you had seen them. You would have thought Heré was only a big woman. What is the good of talking to you?"

Lucy dried her eyes in great surprise; she was quite startled and shaken by the reproof. She looked at the little oracle with a respect which was mingled at once with awe and with gratitude. If he would but say something more! But, instead of uttering any further deliverance, he dropped his elbows again, and let himself down

into the rug, and became altogether unconscious at once of her presence and her difficulties, indifferent as the gods themselves to the sorrows of mortal men.

It is not to be supposed, however, that, after all this, Lucy could settle with much tranquillity to her book, which was the history which she had been reading so conscientiously. When St. Clair had withdrawn, he had taken with him the history book (it was Mr. Froude's version of that oft-told tale), which was as easy to read as any novel, and Lucy was left with her old textbook, which was as dry as facts could make it. She could not read, the book dropped upon her knee half a dozen times in half an hour, and the time of study was nearly over when some one came with a soft knock to the door. It was Miss Southwood who came in with a shawl round her, and her close old-fashioned bonnet tied over her ears. She came in somewhat breathless, and plunged into a few set phrases about the weather without a moment's pause.

"What a dreadful day for your picnic! I could not help thinking of you through all that rain. Did you get very wet, Lucy? and you were riding

too. You must have got everything spoiled that you had on."

"Oh no, for we drove home; but it was not very pleasant."

"Pleasant!—I should think not. It was very foolish—what could you expect in October? Mrs. Rushton must have had some object. What did she mean by it? Ah, my dear, you were a great deal safer in Maria's hands; that is a scheming woman," cried Miss Southwood. Then she touched Lucy on the arm, and made signs at Jock on the rug, "wouldn't you?—" she said, making a gesture with her hand towards the door, "for I want to speak to you—by yourself."

"You need not mind Jock," said Lucy; "he is always there. When he has a book to read he never cares for anything else."

"Oh! I wouldn't trust to his not caring—little pitchers—and then you never know when they may open their mouths and blurt everything out. Come this way a little," Miss Southwood said, leading Lucy to the window, and sinking her voice to a whisper. "I have a note to you from Maria; but my dear I wouldn't give it you without saying—you must not take it by the letter,

Lucy. For my part I don't agree with it at all. It ought to have been sent to you last night ; but I am Frank's aunt as well as Maria. I have a right to my say too ; and I don't agree with it, I don't at all agree with it," Miss Southwood said anxiously. She watched Lucy's face with great concern while she opened the note, standing against the misty-white curtains at the window. The countenance of little Miss Southwood was shaded by the projecting eaves of her bonnet, but it was very full of anxiety, and the interval seemed long to her though the note was short. This is what Mrs. Stone said—

“Dear Lucy,

“On thinking over the extraordinary proposal you made yesterday, I think it right to recommend you to dismiss all idea of my nephew, Frank St. Clair, out of your mind. Your offer is very well meant, but it is impossible, and I trust he will never be so deeply wounded as he would be by hearing of the compensation which you have thought proper to suggest. I don't wish to be unkind, but it is only your ignorance that makes the idea pardonable ; I forgive, and

will try to forget it; but I trust you will take precautions to prevent it from ever reaching the ears of Mr. St. Clair.

“Your friend,

“MARIA STONE.”

This letter brought the tears to Lucy's eyes. “I did not mean to be unkind. Oh, Miss Southwood, you did not think I wanted to insult anyone!”

“It is all nonsense; of course you never meant to insult him,” said Miss Southwood, anxiously. “It is Maria who is cracked, I think. Money is never an insult—unless there is too little of it,” she added, cautiously. “Of course if you were to offer a gentleman the same as you would give to a common man— But my opinion, Lucy, is that Frank himself should be allowed to judge. We ought not to sacrifice his interest for our pride. It is he himself who ought to decide.”

“I do not want to give too little. Oh!” said Lucy, “if you knew how glad I would be to think it was all gone! I thought at first it would be delightful to help everybody—to give them whatever they wanted.”

“But if you give all your money away, you will not be a very great heiress any more.”

“That was what papa meant,” said Lucy. “He thought because my uncle made it, I should have the pleasure of giving it back.”

Miss Southwood looked at her with a very grave face. “My dear,” she said, “if I were you I would not speak of it like this, I would not let it be known. As it is you might marry anybody ; you might have a duke, I verily believe, if you liked ; but if it is known that the money is not yours after all, that you are not the great heiress everybody thinks, it will spoil your prospects, Lucy. Listen to me, for I am speaking as a friend : now that you are not going to marry Frank, I can’t have any motive, can I ? I would not say a word about it till after I was married, Lucy, if I were in your place. It will spoil all your prospects, you will see.”

She raised her voice unconsciously as she gave this advice, till even little Jock was roused. He got upon his elbows and twisted himself round to look at her. And the stare of his great eyes had a fascinating effect upon Miss Southwood. She turned round, involuntarily drawn by them,

and said, with a half shriek, "Good Lord! I forgot that child."

As for Lucy she made no reply; she only half understood what was meant by the spoiling of her prospects, and this serious remonstrance had much less effect upon her, than words a great deal less weighty. "Will you tell me what I am to do?" she said, simply; "and how much do you think it should be, Miss Southwood? Gentlemen spend a great deal more than women. I will write at once to my guardian."

"To your guardian!" Miss Southwood cried; and this time with a real though suppressed shriek, "you will write to your guardian—about Frank?"

Here Lucy laughed softly in spite of herself. "You do not think I could keep thousands of pounds in my pockets? and besides it has all to be done—like business."

"Like business!" Miss Southwood was unreasonably, incomprehensibly, wounded; "write to your guardian," she said, faintly; "about Frank? manage it like business. Oh, Lucy, I fear it was I that was mistaken, and Maria that understood you, after all!"

Why did she cry? Lucy stood by wondering, yet troubled, while her visitor threw herself into a chair and wept. "Oh!" she cried, "I that thought you were a lady! but what is bred in the bone will come out. To offer a favour, and then to expose a person—who is much better born and more a gentleman than yourself!"

This new blow entirely overwhelmed Lucy. She did not know what to reply. Whatever happened she began to think, she must always be in the wrong. She was not a lady, she had no delicacy of feeling; had not Mrs. Russell said so before? Lucy felt herself sink into unimaginable depths. They all despised her, or what was worse, thought of her money, shutting their hearts against herself, and she was so willing, so anxious that they should have her money, so little desirous to get any credit from it. After a while she laid her hand softly upon her visitor's shoulder. "Miss Southwood," she said, in her soft, little, deprecating voice, "if you would only think for a moment, I am only a girl, I do not keep it myself. They only let me have a little, just a little when I want it. It is in the will that my guardians must know, and help me to

decide. Dear Miss Southwood, don't be angry, for I cannot—I cannot do anything else. It is no disgrace not to have money, and no credit or pleasure to have it," Lucy said, with a deep sigh; "no one can know that so well as me."

"You little goose," said Miss Southwood, "why it is *everything* to you! who do you think would have taken any notice of you, who would have made a pet of you, but for your money? I mean, of course," she said, with a compunction, seeing the effect her words produced, "except steady old friends like Maria and me."

Poor little Lucy had grown very pale; her limbs trembled under her, her blue eyes got a wistful look which went to the heart of the woman who had not, so opaque are some intelligences, intended to be unkind. Miss Southwood, even now, did not quite see how she had been unkind. It was as plain as daylight to her that old John Trevor's daughter had no claim whatever upon the consideration of ladies and gentlemen, except on account of her money; which was not to say that she might not, however, have friends in a humbler class, who might care for her, for herself alone. As for Lucy she dropped

down upon a chair, and said no more ; her heart was as heavy as lead. Wherever she turned, was not this dismal burden taken up and repeated, "Your money, and your money alone."

"Oh, no, it does not matter. Must I write to Mr. Chervil, or must it all be given up?" said Lucy, faintly, "and Mr. St. Clair—?"

"If you think so much of him why, why can't you make up your mind and have him?" cried his aunt. "It is not anything so much out of the way, when one knows all the circumstances: for you will not really have such a great fortune after all. Lucy, would it not be much better—?"

Lucy shook her head; she did not feel herself capable of words, and Miss Southwood was about to begin another and an eloquent appeal, when there was once more a summons at the door, and some one was heard audibly coming up stairs. A minute after Mrs. Rushton appeared at the drawing-room door. She was flushed and pre-occupied, and came in quickly, not waiting for the maid; but when she saw Miss Southwood, she made a marked and sudden pause.

"I beg your pardon. I thought I should find you alone, Miss Trevor, at this early hour."

“I am just going,” Miss Southwood said ; and she kissed Lucy affectionately, partly by way of blowing trumpets of defiance to the rival power. “Don’t conclude about what we were speaking of till I see you again ; be sure you wait till I see you again,” she said, as she went away. Mrs. Rushton had not sat down, she was evidently full of some subject of importance. She scarcely waited till her predecessor had shut the door.

“I have come to say a few words to you which I fear will scarcely be pleasant, Miss Trevor ;” she said.

Lucy tried to smile, she brought forward her softest easy-chair with obsequious attention. She had something to make up to Raymond’s mother. “I hope nothing has happened,” she said.

“I will not sit down, I am much obliged to you. No, nothing has happened, so far as I know. It is about yourself I wanted to speak. Miss Trevor, you afforded a spectacle to my party yesterday, which I hope never to see repeated again. I warned you the other night that you were flirting—”

Lucy's countenance, which had been full of alarm, cleared a little, she even permitted herself to smile. "Flirting?" she said.

"I don't think it a smiling matter. You have no mother," said Mrs. Rushton, "and we are all sorry for you—in a measure, we are all very sorry for you. We know what the manner of fashionable circles are, at least of some fashionable circles, are. I have always said that to put you, with your antecedents, into the hands of a woman like Lady Randolph! But I have nothing to do with that, I wash my hands of that. The thing is that it will not do here."

Lucy said nothing. She looked at her new tormentor wistfully, begging for mercy. What had she done?

"Yesterday opened my eyes," said Mrs. Rushton, with a heat and energy which flushed her cheeks. "I have been trying to think you were all a nice girl should be. I have been thinking of you," said the angry woman with some sudden natural tears, "as one of my own. Heaven knows that is what has been in my mind. A poor orphan though she is so rich,

that is what I have always said to myself—poor thing! I will try to be a mother to her.”

“Oh, Mrs. Rushton, you have been very kind. I know it seems ungrateful,” cried Lucy with answering tears of penitence, “but if you will only think—what was I to do?—I don’t want to marry anyone. And Mr. Raymond is— I had never thought—”

There was a momentary pause. Mrs. Rushton had a struggle with herself. Nature had sent her here in Raymond’s quarrel, eager to avenge him somehow, and her mind was torn with the desire to take his part openly, to declare herself on her boy’s side, to overthrow and punish the girl who had slighted him. But pride and prudence came, though tardily, to her assistance here. She stared at Lucy for a moment with the blank look which so often veils a supreme conflict. Then she said with an air of surprise. “Raymond? Do you mean my son? I cannot see what he has to do with the question.”

Lucy felt as a half-fainting patient feels when the traditionary glass of cold water is dashed in her face. She came to herself with a little gasp of astonishment. What was it then? except in

the matter of refusing Ray her conscience was void of all offence. She looked at Mrs. Rushton with wonder in her wide open eyes.

“I do not know,” Mrs. Rushton continued, finding her ground more secure as she went on, “what you mean to insinuate about my boy. *He* is not one that will *ever* lead a girl too far. No, Lucy, that is a thing that will never happen. It is when one of your town set appears that you show yourself in your true colours; but perhaps it is not your fault, perhaps Lady Randolph thinks that quite the right sort of behaviour. I never attempt to fathom the conduct of women of her class.”

At this Lucy began to feel an impulse if not of self-defence, yet of resistance on her friend's behalf. “Please do not speak so of Lady Randolph,” she said with mild firmness; “if you are angry with me—I do not know why it is, but if you are angry, I am very sorry, and you must say what you please of me—but Lady Randolph! I think,” said Lucy, tears coming to her eyes, “if I am not to trust Lady Randolph, I may as well give up altogether, for there seems no one who will stand by me! of all the people I know.”

“Oh, Lady Randolph will stand by you, never fear; so long as you keep your fortune, you are sure of Lady Randolph,” cried Mrs. Rushton with vehemence. “But as for other friends, Miss Trevor, your behaviour must be their guide.”

“Why do you call me Miss Trevor,” cried Lucy, her courage giving way, “what have I done? If it is Raymond that has set you against me, it is cruel. I have done nothing to make my friends give me up,” the poor girl cried, with mingled shame and indignation; for the suggestion of unfit behaviour abashed Lucy, and yet, being driven to bay, she could not but make a little stand in her own defence.

“Raymond again!” cried Mrs. Rushton with an angry laugh, “why should you wish to mix up my son in it? It is not Raymond, as I have said before, that would lead any girl to make an exhibition of herself—but the moment you get with one of your own set! I call you Miss Trevor, because I am disappointed, bitterly disappointed in you. I thought you were a different girl altogether, nice, and modest, and gentle, and—but I have my innocent Emmie to think of, and I will not have her grow up with such an

example before her eyes. Therefore if you see a difference in me you will know the cause of it. I have treated you like a child of my own. I have made parties for you, introduced you everywhere, and this is my reward. But it is always so ; I ought to console myself with that ; those we are kind to are exactly those that turn upon us and rend us. Oh ! what is that, are you setting a dog upon me ? You ungrateful, ill-mannered——”

There was no dog ; but Jock, unobserved by the visitor, had been there all the time, and as Mrs. Rushton grew vehement his attention had been roused. He had raised himself on his elbows, listening with ears and eyes alike, and by this time his patience was exhausted ; the child was speechless with childish fury. He took the easiest way that occurred to him of freeing Lucy. He seized the long folds of Mrs. Rushton’s train which lay near him in not ungraceful undulations, and winding his hands into it, made an effort to drag her to the door. The alarm with which she felt this mysterious tug, which very nearly upset her balance, got vent in a shriek which rang through the whole house. “It

is a mad dog!" she cried, with a rush for the door, carrying Jock along with her. But no mortal thread could stand such an appendage. Mrs. Rushton's dress was slight in fabric, and gave way with a shrieking of stuff rent asunder, and stitches torn loose. Lucy flew to the rescue, catching her little champion in her arms with outcries of horror and apology, yet secret kisses of gratitude and consolation to the flushed and excited child. It was at this moment that Mrs. Ford, having put on her purple silk, sailed into the room, her pace scarcely accelerated by the cries she heard, for she owed it to herself to be dignified in the presence of strangers whatever happened. She paused a moment at the door, throwing up her hands. Then, "For shame Jock! for shame!" she cried loudly, stamping her foot, while Lucy kneeling down, kissing, and scolding, and crying in a breath, endeavoured to unloose the little passionate hot hands. "She should let Lucy alone!" cried Jock with spasmodic fury. He would have held on like the dog for which his enemy took him, through any amount of beating. "I do not wonder after the way in which he has been brought up," cried Mrs. Rushton, panting and furious as she got free.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CUP FULL.

JOCK was not allowed to come down to dinner that day, and Lucy, refusing to leave him, sat with the culprit on her knee, their arms clasped about each other, their hot cheeks touching. "Oh, if we could go away! if we only had a little hut anywhere, you and me, in the loneliest place, where we should never see any of these people more," Lucy cried; and Jock, though he was still in a state of wild excitement, calmed down a little, and began to think of a desolate island, that favourite fancy of childhood "I should not be so clever as Hazel was—for he was a fellow that knew everything; but couldn't I build you a house, Lucy?" the little fellow said, his wet eyes lighting up at the

thought. He had read "Foul Play" not long before. Jock was not fond of the modern novel; but he made an exception in favour of Mr. Reade, as what boy of sense would not do? With this forlorn fancy they consoled themselves as they sat dinnerless, clinging to each other—a lonely pair. Mrs. Ford, half alarmed at the success of her punishment, which was so much greater than she expected, for, to do her justice, she wanted only a lawful submission, and not to deprive the little delicate boy of a meal, came upstairs several times to the door to ask if Jock would submit; but he would not say he was sorry, which was what she required. "Why couldn't she let my Lucy alone? I would do it again," he said, turning a deaf ear to all Mrs. Ford's moral addresses. All this time Lucy held him close, kissing his little tear-wet cheek, and crying over him, so that, perhaps, his firmness was not wonderful. "You should not encourage him, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford. "Come down to your dinner. It is a shame to encourage a little naughty boy; and you can't go without your dinner." "If you had but one in all the world to stand up for you, only one, would you go and forsake him?" cried

Lucy, with floods of hot tears. And then Mrs. Ford went downstairs very uncomfortable, as are all enforcers of domestic discipline, when the culprits will not give way. Against this kind of resistance the very sternest of household despots fight in vain, and Mrs. Ford was not a household despot, but only an ignorant, well-meaning woman, driven to her wit's end. If she were unkind now and then, it was not that she ever meant to be unkind. She grew more and more uncomfortable as time after time she returned beaten to the dinner-table downstairs, which she, herself, could not take any pleasure in, because these two troublesome young persons were fasting above.

This was a mournful meal in the house. Ford himself satisfying his usual good appetite in the natural way, was fallen upon by his wife, and, so to speak, slaughtered at his own table. The dainty dishes she had prepared specially for Lucy were sent away untouched, and the good woman herself ate nothing. She did nothing but talk all through that meal of Jock's misdeemeanour. "And Lucy spoils him so. She will not listen to me. It is bad for the child—dread-

fully bad for the child. He ought to be at school, knocking about among other boys. And instead of that, she sits and cries and kisses him, and goes without her dinner. It's enough to kill the child," cried Mrs. Ford, "at his age, and a delicate boy, to eat nothing all day."

"Then why don't you let him come down and have his dinner," said Ford, his mouth full of a furtive morsel.

"Oh, you never—you never understand anything! Am I the one to ruin that child's morals, and make him think he can do what he likes, for the sake of a dinner? Not till he gives in and says he is sorry," said Mrs. Ford, pushing her plate away with angry emphasis, "but it is Lucy that makes me unhappy," she said, "anybody—anything else for the sake of that boy."

And it cannot be denied that little Jock, at least, heard the rattle of the plates and dishes as they were cleared away with a sinking of the heart; but he would not give in. Lucy was less moved by it. She had something of that contempt for dinners which is an attribute of the female mind, and she was worn with excitement, cast down and discouraged in every way.

She said to herself that she could not have swallowed anything; the mere suggestion seemed to bring a lump in her throat. She wanted to see nobody, to turn her face to the wall, to "give in" altogether. Lucy could not have told what vague mysterious despair was implied in the idea of "giving in," but it seemed the end of all things, the lowest depth of downfall. Notwithstanding this wild desperation and desire to turn her back upon all the world, it was a very welcome interruption when Katie Russell knocked softly at the door, and came in with a subdued eagerness and haste which betrayed that she had something to tell. Katie was not like her usual self any more than Lucy was. There was a soft flush upon her face, an unusual excitement and brightness in her eyes. She came in rapidly, with an "Oh, Lucy ——!" then stopped short when she saw Jock, and the lamentable air of the little group still clinging close together, whose mournful intercourse she had interrupted. Katie burst forth into a little laugh of excitement. "What is the matter with you?" she said. Jock slid out of Lucy's arms, and Lucy rose up from her chair at this ques-

tion. They were glad enough to come to an end of the situation, though they had both made up their minds to accept no comfort. And when Lucy had told the story, Katie's amusement and applause did her friend good in spite of herself. "Bravo, Jock!" Katie cried, with another laugh, which her own personal excitement and need of utterance had no small share in; and she was so much delighted by Mrs. Rush-ton's discomfiture that both sister and brother began to feel more cheerful. "Oh, how I should have liked to see her!" said Katie. And then her own affairs, that were so urgent, rushed into her mind with a fresh suffusion of her face and kindling of her eyes. Lucy was not great in the art of reading looks, but she could see that there was something in Katie's mind that was in the most urgent need of utterance—something fluttering on her very lips that had to be said. "I have got free for the day," she said, with a little quaver in her voice. "Let us go somewhere or do something, Lucy, I cannot stop still in one place. I have something to tell you—"

"I saw it directly in your face—what is it? what is it?" Lucy said. But it was not till she

had gone to her room to get her hat, where Katie followed her, that the revelation came. "Will you have me for a relation?" the girl said, crossing her hands demurely, and making a little curtsy of pretended humility; and then natural emotion regained its power, and Katie laughed, and cried, and told her story. "And you never guessed!" she said; "I thought you would know in a moment. Didn't you notice anything even yesterday? Ah, I know why? you were thinking of your own affairs."

"I was not thinking of any affairs," said Lucy, with a sigh; "I was tormented all day: but never mind—tell me. Philip! he has always seemed so solid, so serious."

"And isn't this serious?" said Katie. "Oh, you don't half see all that it means. Fancy! that he should turn his back upon all the world, and choose me, a girl without a penny!"

"But—all the world? I don't think Philip had so much in his power. What did he turn his back upon? But I am very glad it is you," Lucy said. Still her face was serious. She had not forgotten, and she did not quite understand the scene of last night.

Katie grew very serious too. "I want to speak to you, Lucy," she said. "We are two girls who have always been fond of each other; we always said we would stand by each other when we grew up. Lucy, look here, if you ever *thought of Philip*—if you ever once thought of him—I would cut off my little finger rather than stand in his way!"

Hot tears were in her eyes; but Lucy looked at her with serious surprise, wondering, yet not moved. "I don't know what you mean," she said.

"Oh, but you must know what I mean, Lucy! Perhaps you are not clever; but everybody always said you had a great deal of sense. And you *know* you are the greatest prize that ever was. How can you help knowing? And Philip is one that you have known all your life. Oh, Lucy, tell me, tell me true! Don't you think I would make a sacrifice for *him*? It would break my heart," cried the girl, "but I would sacrifice myself and Bertie, too, and never think twice—for *him*! Answer me, answer me true; between you and me, that have always been fond of each other. Lucy!" cried Katie, seizing her

hands with sudden vehemence, "answer me as if we were two little girls at school. Did you ever think of Philip? Would you have had him if—if he had not liked me?"

Lucy drew her hands away with an energy which was violence in her. "I think you are all trying to drive me out of my senses. I! think of Philip or anyone! I never did, I never will," she cried, with sudden tears. "I don't want to have anyone, or to think of anyone, as you say. Will you only let me alone, all you people? First one and then another; and not even pretending," the poor girl cried with sobs, "that it is for me."

"I am not like that, Lucy," Katie said, in mournful tones; for why should Lucy cry, she asked herself, if it were not that she had "thought of" Philip. "I am fond of you, and I know you would make anyone happy. It is not only for your money. Oh, I know, I know," Katie cried; "what a difference it would make to him if he married you: and what is pride between you and me? Only say you care for him the very least in the world—only say—. Lucy," cried Katie, solemnly, "if it was so,

though it would break my heart, I would make poor Bertie take me off somewhere this very day, to New Zealand or somewhere, and not leave a word or a trace, and never see either of you more."

Lucy had recovered a little spirit during this last assault upon her. She had got to the lowest depth of humiliation, she thought, and rebounded. The emergency gave her a force that was not usual to her. "I once read a book like that," she said; "a girl went away, because she thought another girl cared for the gentleman. Don't you think that would be pleasant for the other girl? to think that she had made such an exhibition of herself, and that the gentleman had been cheated into caring for her? I—I am sure I never made any exhibition of myself," Lucy cried, with rising warmth. "One is to me just like another. I am very willing to be friends if they will let me alone; but as for Philip! I am glad you like him," she said, recovering her serenity with an effort. "I am very glad you are going to marry him. And, Katie!" here a sudden thought flashed into the mind of the heiress. If it ever could be made to appear

natural to give money away, surely here was the occasion. She clapped her hands suddenly, with an unaffected simple pleasure, which was all the more delightful that it was a flower plucked, so to speak, from the very edge of a precipice. "They cannot say anything against that," she cried; "it will be only like a wedding present." And satisfaction came back to Lucy's heart.

"Oh, never mind about the wedding present—so long as you like it, Lucy—that is the best," cried the other; and then Katie's confidences took the more usual form. "Fancy, I have not seen him yet," she said; "I got the letter only this morning, and I answered it, you know. Don't you think a girl should give an answer straight off, and not keep him in suspense? for I had always, always, you know, from the very beginning, from that night when he came in—don't you recollect? Now I see you never can have thought of Philip, Lucy, for you don't recollect a bit! It was a beautiful letter; but it was a funny letter, too. He said he could not help himself. Oh, I understand it quite well! Of course he did not want, if he could have

helped it, to marry a girl without a penny in the world."

"Does that matter, when he is fond of you?" Lucy said.

"Ah! it is only when you are awfully rich that you can afford to be so disinterested," cried Katie. "Naturally, he did not want to marry a girl with nothing. And you may say what you like, Lucy; but for a man to have a chance of you and like me the best! There, I will never say another word; but if it makes me vain can I help it? To choose me when he had the chance of you!"

"He never had the chance of me," cried Lucy, with returning indignation. "What do you all take me for, I wonder? Am I like something in a raffle, in a bazaar? Can people take tickets for me, and draw numbers, and everyone have a chance? It is not like a friend to say so. And there is no one, if you fail me, Katie, no one that I can trust."

"You may trust me, to my very last breath," cried Katie with indescribable fervour. And Lucy felt, with a softening sensation of relief and comfort, that surely here was a stronghold

opening for her: Katie and Philip. She could trust in them if in nobody else. Philip had been the one honest among all the people round her. He had loved somebody else, he had not been able to pretend that it was Lucy he loved. She thought of the scene of the previous night with an uneasy mixture of pleasure and pain. How strange that they should all think so much of this money, which to Lucy conveyed so little comfort! But Philip had escaped the snare. And now she thought there could be no doubt that she had found a pair of friends whom she could trust.

Jock all this time waited downstairs; but he was not impatient. Jane, the housemaid, charged with a sandwich which Mrs. Ford herself had prepared, waylaid him on the landing, and Jock wanted small persuading. He was a boy who liked sandwiches; and to have his own way and that too, was enough to reconcile him to a little waiting. He had just time to dispose of it while the girls lingered; and it was very good, and he felt all the happier. He sallied forth a little in advance, as was his habit when Lucy was not alone, his little nose in the air, his head in the

clouds. He did not pay any attention to the secrets the others were whispering; why should he? At eight the superiority of sex is as acutely felt as at any other age. Jock was loyal to his sister through every fibre of his little being; still Lucy was only a girl when all was said.

It was a beautiful day after the yesterday's rain. The blue of the sky had a certain sharpness, as skies are apt to have when they have wept much; but the air was light and soft, relieved of its burden of moisture. It was Katie who was the directress of the little party, though the others were not aware of it. She led them through the streets till they reached a little ornamental Park into which the High Street fell at one end. Then suddenly in a moment, Katie gave her friend's arm a sudden pressure. "Oh, Lucy," she cried, "have a little feeling for *him*: you have so much for me, have a little for *him*," and disengaging herself, she ran on and seized Jock's hand, who was marching serenely in front. Lucy astonished, paused for a moment not knowing how to understand this sudden desertion—and found her hand in the hand of Bertie Russell,

who had appeared she could not tell from whence.

“This is good fortune indeed,” he said, “what a happy chance for me that you should take your walk here !”

Lucy felt her heart flutter like a bird fallen into a snare. It was not that she was frightened for Bertie Russell, but it was that she had been betrayed in the very tenderness of her trust. “Katie brought us,” she said gravely. Katie, who was stimulating Jock to a race, had got almost out of hearing, and the other two were left significantly alone. Lucy felt her heart sink ; was there another scene like that of yesterday to be gone through again ?

“Katie is perhaps more kind to me than she is to you, Miss Trevor,” said Bertie, “she knew I wanted to tell you—various things ; and she did not realise, perhaps, that it would be so disagreeable to you.”

This troubled Lucy in her sensitive dislike to give pain. “Oh,” she said, “Mr. Bertie, indeed I did not mean to be rude.”

“You could not be rude,” he said with an audible sigh. “Those who have not the gift to

please, have only themselves to blame. I wanted to call, but your old lady does not like me, Miss Trevor. I heard this morning from Mrs. Berry-Montagu. Did I tell you she had taken me up? She has been in Scotland in her husband's shooting quarters, and she says Sir Thomas Randolph is off to the East again."

"To the East!" Lucy said; what did it mean? for a moment the sight seemed to go out of her eyes, the world to swim round her. A great giddiness came over her; was she going to be ill? she did not understand what it was.

"Yes," said Bertie's voice, quite unconcerned—and, even in the midst of this wonderful mist and darkness, it was a consolation to her that he did not seem to perceive her condition. "When that mania of travel seizes a man there is no fighting against it. Mrs. Montagu says that Lady Randolph is in despair."

"I should think she will not like it," Lucy said. The light was beginning slowly to come back. She saw the path under her feet, and the shrubs that stood on either hand, and Bertie by her side whom she had been so alarmed to see, but whom she thought nothing of now. What did it mean? she was too much confused and

confounded in all her faculties to be able to tell. And she asked no questions. That was why Sir Tom had not written, had not taken any notice. Lucy had thought herself very wretched, abandoned by heaven and earth this morning, but how different were her sensations now! An invisible prop had been taken away, which had held her up without her own knowledge. She felt herself sink down to the very dust, her limbs and her courage failing alike. And all the time Bertie's voice went on.

"I have been wandering about the town, renewing my acquaintance with it, and making notes. May I tell you about what I am going to do, Miss Trevor? Perhaps it will only bore you? Well, if you will let me—I am about beginning my second book; and your advice did so much for me in the first. I know how much of my success I owe to you."

"Oh no, no, Mr. Bertie," said Lucy, "you only say so. I never gave you any advice, you don't owe anything to me."

"Perhaps not," he said with a smile. "Perhaps the Madonna on the mast does not save the poor Italian fisherman from the storm. You may

think, if you are a severe Protestant, that she has nothing to do with it; but he kneels down and thanks our Lady when he gets on shore, and you must let me thank the saint of my invocation too."

Lucy made no reply. She did not understand what he meant by all these fine words, and if she had understood she did not care. What did it matter? His voice was not much more to her than the organ playing popular tunes in the street beyond. The two sounds made a sort of half ludicrous concert to her ears. She heard them, and heard them not, and went on in a maze, still giddy, not knowing where she was going, keeping very still to command herself. Gone to the East! all that she thought had been over. He had gone to Scotland, from whence he was to write, and she to him, if she wanted advice or anything—that was what he had said—anything! And he had written to her, but not for a long time. And now he was going away again, going away perhaps for ever. This was what was going on in Lucy's mind while Bertie spoke. She had no feeling about Bertie now, or about the betrayal of her trust by his sister. What did it matter? Sir Tom was going—going to the East. Some-

times she felt disposed to grasp at Bertie's arm to steady herself, and sometimes there came over her an almost irrestrainable impulse to break in, to say "To the East! do you mean that he is really, really going to the East?" It was only instinct that saved her, not anything better. When the words came to her lips, she became vaguely conscious that he was talking about something else.

Bertie, on his part, was too much occupied with his own idea to perceive that Lucy was pre-occupied also. He thought indeed that she was listening to him with a sort of interested absorption, unresistingly—which indeed was true enough. Katie and Jock sped on before, leaving him full space and leisure for his suit. She was altogether at his mercy, walking downcast by his side, listening timidly, too shy to make any reply. It flashed across his mind that it was just thus that he would describe a girl who was going to yield and make her lover happy—make him happy! Yes, there could be no doubt of that; she would make him happy, as very few had it in their power to do. The bliss Lucy could bestow would be substantial bliss. What

unappreciated efforts Bertie made! the hero in a novel was never more eloquent. He compared Lucy to all manner of fine things. And she heard him, and heard him not. It was very hard upon Bertie. But when, beginning to feel discouraged by her silence, he went back upon the recollections of her life in Grosvenor Street, Lucy woke up from her abstraction. Even Mrs. Berry-Montague restored her interest. "May I send a message from you when I write to her?" he said. "She is always inquiring after you. There are none of your acquaintances that do not take an interest in you—unless, perhaps, it might be an old man about town like Sir Tom."

"Sir Thomas is always kind—there is no one so kind," cried Lucy, with a little excitement; "if you say he does not take any interest, it is because you don't know."

"Oh, I did not mean any harm; but pardon me if I cannot bear to see a man like Sir Tom come near you, Miss Trevor. People show their feelings in different ways. Mine—you don't much care to hear about mine—take an old-fashioned form. There are people who are not worthy to touch the hem of your dress."

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Russell. Sir Tom is better, far better, than most of the people I know, and as for me I am not sacred, I don't know why anyone should think of the hem of my dress."

"But you are sacred to me," said Bertie, feeling that the moment was come. "Pardon me if I go too far. But what else can a man say when he has put himself under you as his saint, as his guiding star, since ever he began to be worth anything? that is only since I knew you, Lucy. Of course I know I am not half, nor a quarter, good enough for you. But ever since you began to come to Hampstead you know what you have been to me; you have inspired me, you have made me what I am. You thought, or the Randolphins thought, that it was presumption to put your name upon my book—"

"Oh, Mr. Bertie, why do you bring that up again—it is all over and past. You made people talk of me and laugh at me, and put me in the papers. It was dreadful! but it is all over, and I don't want to hear of it any more."

"It was the best I had," said Bertie, with not unnatural indignation. "It was all I had, and

queens have not scorned such offerings ; but, if you do not care for that, you might care for a man's devotion, Lucy—you might care for—”

“ Oh, Mr. Bertie, don't, please don't say any more.”

“ I know how to take an answer,” he said, “ I won't persecute you as that cub did yesterday ; but I must know whether you mean it really—whether you know what I mean. Lucy ! you must let me call you so just once more—is it only shyness ? are you frightened, don't you understand ? or do you know that, when I offered my book to you, I offered, like all the poets, my heart, my life, my——”

“ Lucy,” said Jock, suddenly rushing upon her, rushing between them and pushing, with the mere force of his coming, the impassioned suitor away, “ Katie has met Philip, and they don't want me. What are you doing, talking so long ? Philip looks so queer, I don't know what is the matter with him. And I want to go home. I hate a walk like this—there is no fun in it. And I want to go home ; come !” cried the child, hanging on to her skirts. Bertie looked at him with a vindictive stare of rage and disappointment. There was not another word to say.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN THE NIGHT'S DARKEST IT'S NEAREST THE
DAWNING.

NOT a word could Lucy say all the way home. She was flushed and agitated, her hand burning, which grasped Jock's, her eyes dim with moisture. When she got home she made no reply to Mrs. Ford, who came out to meet her; but, dropping Jock's hand, ran up-stairs to the quiet of that still, pink sitting-room, where the "Heroes" still lay open on the rug, and her chair stood as she had thrust it back. The afternoon was fading into twilight, the lamps were lighted outside, throwing a strange onesided sort of chilly illumination into the room, though mingled with the daylight. Lucy shut the door behind her, as if it had been the door of a her-

mitage. No one would come to disturb her there, unless it might be Mrs. Ford, to persuade her to go down to tea. How could Lucy go and sit at the homely table, and listen to all the potterings of the pair, over their bread and butter? She could not do it. Agitation had driven away all trace of appetite; she wanted nothing, she thought, but to be let alone. She sat down upon the sofa, and gazed out wistfully at the bit of blue sky that appeared between the white curtains. There was not so much as that bit of blue sky in all Lucy's world. Not one true to her, not one who did not see something in her quite different from herself. Her other suitors had startled Lucy; but this last application for her love had driven her to bay. She did injustice to poor Bertie in the vehemence of her feelings. Though he had spoken in high-flown language, he was not in reality worse than the others, nor had he a worse meaning. They all of them had known that Lucy was the most desirable thing within their reach. They had recognized with the truest sincerity that she could make them happy, that no one could make them so happy; they had aspired to her with

all the fervour of heartfelt sentiment ; and Bertie had not been behind the others in this very earnest and unquestionable feeling. Why then should he have made her so angry—he, and not the others? She could not tell ; but she came in, feeling a universal sickening of distrust, which took all the heart out of her. She sat down dismally upon her pink sofa. Nobody to trust to. What fate in the world could be so terrible? The cold gleaming of the lamps outside were a kind of symbol of all her life had to sustain it : faint reflections of the outside light of the world, but no warmth of a household lamp or hearth within. She sat down forlorn, and began to cry. “ Nobody, nobody !” said poor Lucy. She did her best to survey the situation calmly, dismal as it was. What was she to do? All her friends had forsaken her ; but she had Jock left, and those duties which her father had trusted to her hands. She must go on with her trust whatever happened. She kept hold of a kind of reality in her life, by grasping at this resolution. Yes, she would do her duty ; whoever failed she would hold on, she would do what her father had said. It was still something that was left in life.

It seemed to Lucy, all at once, as if a new light had come upon this duty. It was in love to her as well as in justice to others that her father had charged her to give it back. Oh, if it could all be given back—got rid of, her life delivered from it, and she herself left free like other girls! Lucy's sky seemed to her all gloomy and charged with clouds, great rolling masses of vapour, clouds of wealth, which had risen out of the earth, and only by dispersion to earth again would leave her free. She understood what her father meant—rain to relieve the clouds, tears to relieve the heat in her forehead, the gasp in her throat. But at present the clouds were hanging suspended over her, hiding all the blueness of the heavens, and her tears were few and hot, not enough to relieve either head or heart. Nobody faithful—not one! the women conspiring, even Katie, the men paying false court, making false professions, and everyone maligning the other, accusing the others of that falsehood which they knew to be in themselves. “Not one,” she repeated to herself; “not one,” and then a cry was forced out of Lucy's poor little wrung heart. “Not even Sir Tom!” she said aloud, with a

sudden torrent of tears. Was this, though she did not know it, the worst of all? Certainly the name opened those floodgates against which her passion of wounded feeling had been straining: her tears came in a violent thunder shower. "Not even Sir Tom!" It was the hardest of all.

Something stirred in the dimness behind her. She had taken no notice of anything in the room when she came in, blind with those tears which she was not able to shed until she found that talisman. Some one seemed to make a step forward. Was she then not alone? or was it her imagination only which made her heart jump? No, for Lucy's imagination never went so far as this. It could not have created the voice which said, with that familiar tone, "What has Sir Tom done?" with a touch of emotion and a little touch of laughter in it, just over her head, as she sat and sobbed. The sudden cry with which Lucy replied told all her little secret, even to herself. She got up and turned round, transformed, her innocent lips apart, her eyes all wet and blinded, yet seeing— But what she saw was not very clear, a big shadow, a something that was very real, not false at all, a figure that

somehow—why? Lucy could not tell—put the world right again, and stopped the giddiness, and made the ground solid under her feet. She put out her hands, yet more in meaning than in action, half groping, half appealing.

“Who is it? is it *you*?” she said.

“Lucy, what has Sir Tom done to make you cry?” he asked, taking her hands into his. Was it possible that she did not feel any longer this most poignant stab of all? She could not in the least recollect what it was. She thought of it no more. It sailed away from her firmament as a cloud sails on a steady breeze.

“Oh, I am so glad you have come home,” she cried.

Sir Tom was touched almost to tears. No one could see it, but he felt the moisture steal into the corners of his eyes. This was not a congenial place for him this *bourgeois* room, nor had this little girl, in her simplicity, any right to greet him so. And Sir Thomas had by no means made up his mind, when he came to see his aunt’s *protégée*, notwithstanding her heiress-ship, that he was going to give up his freedom and independence, and subject himself to all manner of vulgar com-

ments for her sake. But these words sealed his fate. He could no more have resisted their modest, simple appeal, so unconscious as it was, than he could have denied his own nature. He did what he had done when he left her, but with a very different meaning ; he stooped over her and kissed her seriously on the forehead ; he had done it half paternally, half in jest, when he went away.

“Yes, my dear, I have come home,” with a little quiver in his voice Sir Thomas said ; and after an interval, “I think my little Lucy must have missed me. What is the matter ? who has been vexing you ? and even Sir Tom : did I do something amiss too ?”

“We will speak of that after,” Lucy said, with a relief which was beyond all comprehension. She could talk again, her tongue was loosened and her heart opened. She had not been able to confide in anyone for so long, and now all at once some door seemed opened, some lock undone. “It does not seem anything now you are here. I am sure it was right, quite right,” she cried, with a sob and a laugh together. “I

knew *underneath* that it must be right all the time."

Sir Tom did not insist upon knowing what it was; he made her sit down, and placed himself by her, still holding her hands.

"But something has been wrong," he said. "My little girl is not in such trouble without some cause. Mrs. Ford tells me there was a disturbance this morning, and that Jock was naughty, and you went out without any dinner. Come tell me! you can trust in me."

Had she not heard over and over again that he was not to be trusted? Had she not believed, with the deepest sting of all, that Sir Tom had failed her? Lucy did not remember. "Oh, yes," she said, from the bottom of her heart. It seemed so easy to tell everything now. And then the whole pent-up stream poured forth. The trouble of the morning could not be disclosed without leading to all the rest. Sometimes she cried as she spoke, sometimes almost laughed, the fact that he was there taking all the sting out of her troubles. And as for Sir Tom, though there was sometimes a gleam of indignation in him, he felt more disposed to

laughter than to tears. Lucy's troubles were very simple and transparent to him; she might have known that her fortune would tempt everybody—though the fact that she had not known, and that even proofs had not convinced her, was the thing which most profoundly touched Sir Tom's experienced heart.

“You have had a pretty set of guardians,” he said; “these are all people that have had the charge of you, Lucy?” He did not at the moment recollect that Lady Randolph had the charge of her also, and had instantly, from the ends of the world, summoned himself. Then he said, “Lucy, listen to me; this is the sort of thing you will be subject to, I fear, wherever you go; and I don't know what you will think of me when you hear what I am going to say. I know you have a grievance against me which you are to tell me by and by——”

“No, oh no,” cried Lucy, fervently; “I know now it must have been a mistake.”

He smiled, but the smile was not that of mere triumph. He was old enough to be touched by his own unexpected success, to be grateful to the young creature who had resisted all other

claims upon her regard, to give her heart so unreservedly to him; and there was even more than this, a something which, at the moment, was very like love, which probably was the most passionate sentiment he was likely to entertain now, after all his experiences, for anyone. He was "very fond of" Lucy. He understood her simple goodness, and regarded it with that soft paternal enthusiasm which a beloved child excites in us; and he was grateful to her, and deeply touched by her choice of himself, a choice of which he could have very little doubt. "And you have heard a great deal of harm of me—all these good people have said something. They have said Tom Randolph was not a man to be your friend."

"I have not believed them," said Lucy. "I know you better. I have not believed a word."

"But you might have believed, Lucy. You must listen to me now, my dear. I have not been a good man, as you give me credit for being. I cannot say of myself that I am fit to be the companion of a young, pure, good girl."

"Oh, Sir Tom!" Lucy cried in indignant

protestation. Words would not serve her to say more.

“ Yes,” he said, shaking his head regretfully. “ It is quite true. I who know myself best confess it to you ; but still there is a little truth left in me. I am going to enter the lists with all these others, Lucy. I am going to ask you to set yourself free from all of them by marrying me.”

“ *Marrying—you, Sir Tom !*”

“ Yes ! me. People will say I am a fortune-hunter like the rest.”

Lucy could not bear even this censure suggested by himself. She had been looking at him seriously all the time, showing her emotion only by the changing colour of her face, which, indeed, it was not very easy to see. Now she made a hasty movement of impatience, stamping her foot upon the ground, “ No !” she said. “ No ! they would not dare to say that. It would not be true.”

“ It would be true so far that, if you were a little girl without any fortune, I should not dare to ask you to marry me, for I am a poor man ; but not any worse than that. Will you marry

me, Lucy?" Sir Thomas said. He let her hands go free, and held out his own. He was not afraid like the others. It cannot even be said that he had much doubt what the answer would be.

Lucy had not shrunk from him, nor showed any appearance of timidity. She sat quite quietly looking at him, her eyes showing through the gathering twilight, but not much else. There was a little quiver about her mouth, but that did not show.

"Must I be married at all?" she said in a very low voice.

This chilled Sir Thomas a little—for he had expected a much warmer reply. He had thought it possible that she would fling herself upon his breast, and receive his proposal with the same soft enthusiasm with which she had welcomed his coming. He forgot how young she was, how childlike, and how serious and dutiful in every new step she had to take.

"Yes," he said with a little jar in his voice, "unless you are always to be running the gauntlet through a string of suitors. You like me, Lucy?"

“Oh, Sir Tom, yes !”

“And I—” he stopped the other words on his own lips ; he would be honest and no more ; he would not say love, which indeed was a word he knew he had soiled by ignoble use, and employed ere now in a very different sense. “And I,” he said, “am very fond of you.”

There was a pause. He never could have thought he would have felt so anxious, or that his heart would have beaten as it was beating. Through the twilight he could see Lucy's serious eyes, not stars, or anything superlative, but honest tranquil eyes, with a little curve of thought over each brow, looking at him. She was anxious too. At last she said with a soft sigh. —
“I wish, I wish I knew—”

“What, Lucy ?”

“What is right,” she said with a little hurrying and faltering of the words, “what papa would have liked. It is so hard to tell. He left me a great many instructions for different things, but not a word, not a word about this.”

“In this, you may be sure, he wished your heart to be your guide,” said Sir Thomas, “and so, even if you decide against me, do I——”

"How could I decide against you, Sir Tom?" she said with a soft reproach. "I am thinking, only thinking, what is right."

What was Sir Thomas to do?—he began to feel that his position was almost ludicrous, sitting here, suspended upon Lucy's breath, waiting for her answer. This was not the triumphant position which he had occupied ten minutes ago, when he felt himself to be the Deliverer, coming with acclamations to set everything right. Whether to be very angry and annoyed, or to laugh at this curious turning of the tables—to be patient and wait her pleasure, or to betray the half-provoked, half-amused impatience he began to feel—he did not know.

The matter was decided in a way as unlooked for as was the crisis itself. Suddenly, without any warning, the door bounced open and Mrs. Ford stood in the doorway, in a dark vacancy, which showed her darker, substance like a drawing in sepia. "Lucy," she said solemnly, "do you mean to starve yourself to death, all to spite me? I have not had a moment's peace all day since you went out without your dinner. Sir Thomas

Randolph, if you have got any influence with her, *make* her come down to her tea."

"I will, Mrs. Ford," he said.

"There's a roast partridge," said Mrs. Ford with real emotion. "Jock, bless him, has eat up the other. Oh, Lucy, if you do not want to make me wretched, come down to your tea!"

"I am coming," said Lucy. She rose up, and so did her companion—Mrs. Ford in the doorway looking on, not seeing anything but the two shadows, yet wondering and troubled in her mind to think of the neglect which had left them there without any lights. "I will give it to that Lizzie," said Mrs. Ford internally; but there was something in the air which she did not understand, which kept her silent in spite of herself.

Then Lucy put her hand into Sir Thomas's hand, which was no longer held out for it. "If you think it is the best," she said very low in her serious voice, "you have more sense than I have. Tell me what to do. Do you think it is the best?"

Sir Thomas had been confused by the strange and unexpected position; he had been prepared

for an easy triumph, and at the moment of coming it had eluded him ; and when he had almost made up his mind to the reverse, here was another surprise and change. But Lucy's voice again touched a deeper chord than he was conscious of. He was affected beyond description by the trust she placed in him. He took the hand she gave him within his own. "Lucy," he cried with a thrill of passionate feeling in his voice, "as God shall judge between us, I believe it is the best ; but not, my dear, unless you feel that it will be happy for you."

"Oh !" cried Lucy with a soft breath of ease and content which scarcely seemed to form words, yet shaped into them, "Happy ! but it was not *that* I was thinking of," she said.

He drew her hand within his arm. It was triumph after all, but of a kind original, surprising, with a novelty in it that went to his heart, touching all that was tender in him. He led her down stairs into Mrs. Ford's parlour, with his mind in a confusion of sympathy and respect and pleasure—and carved her partridge for her, and ate half of it with a sacramental solemnity, and a laugh in his eyes, which were

glistening and dewy. "You see," he said, addressing the mistress of the house, who looked on somewhat grimly, "it is not because I am greedy, but because she will not eat without company. She wants company. She does not care for the good things you get for her, unless you will share them too."

"I declare!" cried Mrs. Ford, "I never thought of that before. Lucy, is it true?"

"It is quite true," said Sir Thomas gravely, with always the laugh in his eyes. "She cares for nothing unless she can share it. Has she eaten up her half honestly? You see I know how to manage her. Will you let me marry her, Mrs. Ford?"

"Sir Thomas!" cried the pair in consternation in one voice. He had come so opportunely to their assistance that they had quite forgotten he was a wolf in the fold. Ford thrust up his spectacles off his forehead, and let the evening paper (which had come in Sir Thomas's pocket) drop from his hands, and as for Mrs. Ford she gasped for breath.

But the two at the table took it very quietly. Lucy looked up with eyes more bright than her

eyes had ever been before, and a colour which was very becoming, which made her almost beautiful; and Sir Thomas (who certainly was a real gentleman, with no pride about him), comforted them with friendly looks, without the slightest appearance of being ashamed of himself. "Yes," he said. "We both think it will answer so far as we are concerned. You are her oldest friends. Will you let me marry her, Mrs. Ford?"

The question was answered in a way nobody expected. There raised itself suddenly up to the level of the table, a small head supported upon two elbows, rising from no one knew where. "Sir Tom was the one I always wanted," said little Jock.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GUARDIANS.

SIR THOMAS RANDOLPH got up next morning with his usual good spirits a little heightened by something, he could not immediately recollect what. The doubt lasted only for a moment, but perhaps his happiness was not so instantaneously present to his mind as a new vexation would have been. But on his second waking moment, he jumped up from his bed and laughed. The red October sunshine was shining into his room; he went and looked out from his window upon the noble trees in his park, stretching far away in ruddy masses, all golden and red with the frosty, not fiery, finger (pardon, dear poet!) of Autumn. As far as he could see (and a great deal further) the land was his; but, oh!

poor acres! how heavy with mortgages! how stiff with borrowings! heavier and stiffer than the native clay, of which there was too much about Farafield; but that was all over, this red, russet October morning; the house had a mistress, and the land was free.

Was it a wrong to Lucy that he thought of this so soon? He laughed, at first, at the astounding position in which he suddenly recollected himself to stand, as a betrothed man, a happy and successful lover; and then there suddenly rushed into his mind the idea that the change would make him entirely independent, safe from all duns, free of all creditors, his own master on his own land. When, however, he went downstairs and ate his solitary breakfast near the fire in the great panelled room, with its old tapestries and family portraits, the noblest room in the county, though as good as shut up for so many years—there came quite sweetly and delightfully into Sir Tom's mind the idea, not of the hospitalities which now were possible, but of a little serious countenance, with two mild blue eyes, following his looks with a little strain of intelligence, not quite, *quite* sure all at once of

his meaning, but always sure that he was right, and soon finding out what he meant, and lighting up with understanding all the more pleasant for the first surprise of uncertainty. When this little vision glanced across him, he put down his newspaper, which he had taken up mechanically, and smiled at it over the table. "Give me some tea, Lucy," he said, with an amused, exhilarated, almost excited realisation of what was going to be. "I beg your pardon, Sir Thomas?" said the solemn butler, just coming in; and then, will it be believed? Sir Tom, who had knocked about the world for so many years, Sir Tom, who had touched the borders of middle-age, and gone through no small amount of experiences—blushed! He laughed afterwards and resumed his paper—but that there had come over, between his big moustache and his quite unthinned and plentiful locks, a delightful youthful suffusion of warmth and colour, it was impossible to deny. He felt it quite necessary to sound a trumpet forthwith, so much tickled was he with his own confusion, and pleased with himself. "Williams, I am going to be married," he said. Williams was a man who had been all over the world with

his master, who had himself gone through various transformations, had been a saucy valet, and an adventurer, and a dignified family servant by turns, and was not a man to be surprised at anything ; but he stopped short in the middle of the room, and said " Indeed, Sir Thomas !" in a tone more like bewilderment than any that ever had been heard from him before. " Did you ever hear such a joke ? " said the master, thinking of his own blush, that unparalleled circumstance ; and " It do indeed, Sir Thomas," Mr. Williams gravely replied.

However, after this serious revelation there were more serious matters in hand. Sir Thomas had decided that he would go to Mr. Rushton in the morning, who was the real guardian, and with whom in any case he would have to do ;—whether it would be necessary in everything to observe the ordinances of the will, which Lucy, he knew, had declared her determination to stand by, and ask the consent of all that board of guardians to whom old Trevor had given the power of hampering and hindering Lucy's marriage was a thing he had not made up his mind upon ; but with Mr. Rushton, at least, he must have to do. He drove into Fara-

field through the keen air of the bright, chill, sunshiny morning with great courage and confidence. It might be said that he was fortune-hunting too; but if he would receive a certain advantage from the heiress, it was certain that he had something to offer on his side which no woman would despise. To put her at the head of the noblest old house and the most notable family in the county was a balance on his side which made Lucy's advantage no more than was desirable. Mr. Rushton, however, presented the air of a man perturbed and angry when Sir Thomas entered his office. A letter was lying on the table before him, the sight of which, it must be allowed somewhat discomposed even Sir Tom. Was it Lucy's handwriting? Had she taken it upon her to be the first to communicate to her legal guardian the change in her fortunes which had happened? If this had been the case, no doubt Sir Tom would have adapted himself to it, and concluded by finding it quite natural and becoming that a girl in so exceptional a position should take this upon herself. But in the meantime he felt just a little annoyed, and disconcerted too.

“I see you are busy,” Sir Thomas said.

“No—not so much busy—I am always busy at this hour, and shall be I hope as long as my strength lasts ; but not more than usual. The truth is,” said Mr. Rushton with a suppressed snarl, “I’m provoked—and not much wonder if you knew all.”

Sir Thomas looked at the open letter in spite of himself. “May I ask if I have anything to do with your annoyance?” he said.

“You !” the lawyer opened his eyes wide, then laughed angrily. “No, I don’t suppose it can be you. She is not quite so silly as that.”

“Silly !” echoed Sir Thomas, “perhaps it will be better to tell you at once without any circumlocution what my errand is. I have come to tell you, Rushton, a piece of news which may surprise you—that I have made an offer to Miss Trevor, and that she has accepted me.”

Mr. Rushton said not a word ; he was altogether taken aback. He stood with his mouth open, and his eyebrows forming large semi-circles over his eyes, and stared at Sir Thomas without a word.

“This naturally,” said the hero of the occa-

sion with a laugh, “ makes it—not quite safe—to criticise Miss Trevor to me.”

“ Accepted—*you* !” He could scarcely get his breath, so bewildered was he. “ Do you mean to say that you—want to marry Lucy Trevor ?” Mr. Rushton said.

“ Yes ! in common with various other people,” said Sir Thomas, “ some of whom you may have heard of ; but the speciality in my case is, that she has accepted me. I thought it my duty to come to you at once as Miss Trevor’s guardian. I hope you do not object to me—you have known me long enough—as a suitor for her. I am rather old for her perhaps—but otherwise, I think ——”

“ Accepted—*you* !” the lawyer repeated ; and then he gave utterance to a hard laugh. “ She is young, but she is a cool one,” he said. “ Accepts you one minute, and writes to me to make a provision for an old lover, I suppose. Probably some one she has cast off for your sake—the minx ! She *is* a cool one,” Mr. Rushton said.

“ You forget—what I have this minute told you, Rushton.”

“ No, pardon me, I don’t forget !” said Lucy’s

guardian. "She is only a girl as you may say, but it seems to me she is fooling us all. Look at that—read that," he said, tossing the open letter at Sir Thomas, who, for his part, took it, how could he help it? with a little tremble of apprehension. This is what he read:

"Dear Mr. Rushton.

"I think I have found some one else that is all that is required by papa's will. This time it is a gentleman, and as he is not married, and has no children, it will not require so much. He is very clever, and has a good profession; but his health is not good, and he wants rest. This is just what papa would have wished, don't you think so? Two or three thousand pounds would do, I think—and I will tell you everything about it and explain all, if you will come to me, or if I can go and see you. I have written to Mr. Chervil too.

"Sincerely yours,

"LUCY TREVOR."

"Did you ever hear anything like it?" said the lawyer, exasperated. "If there is still time, you

will thank me for letting you know, Sir Thomas. Who can tell who this person is? And the moment you appear, no doubt much better worth the trouble—”

“Must I again remind you of what I said?” Sir Thomas repeated. “This has reference, so far as I can see, to a condition of the father’s will, which Miss Trevor has very much in her mind.”

“She has told you of it? There never was so mad a proviso. They have ‘a bee in their bonnet,’ as the Scotch say. And I’ve got to stand by and see a fine fortune scattered to the winds! That girl will drive me mad. I lose my head altogether when I think of her. The old man was always an eccentric, and he couldn’t take the money with him. You know a man doesn’t feel it, what he does by his will; but that any living creature, in their senses, should throw away good money! I believe that girl will drive me mad.”

“*A la bonne heure*,” said Sir Thomas, “you have nothing to do but transfer your charge to me.”

“Ah! you’ll put a stop to it? I see. A husband can do a great many things; that is what I thought, that was my idea when— There

are a great many things to be taken into consideration, Sir Thomas," Mr. Rushton said, recovering his self-possession. "Your proposal is one to be treated respectfully, but nevertheless in my ward's interests——"

"I think those interests have been considerably risked already," said Sir Thomas gravely. "I do not think they are safe here; she is with people who do not know how to take care of her."

"According to the will, Sir Thomas——"

"But it is not according to the will, that she should have no guardianship at all, but be approached by every youth that happens to cross her path."

Mr. Rushton winced; if his wife schemed was it his fault? "Ah! I have heard something of that," he said. "Some young fellow who followed her from town; it must be put a stop to."

"It is put a stop to," said Sir Thomas, "Miss Trevor has, as I tell you, accepted me."

"That is the most effectual way certainly, isn't it?" Mr. Rushton said discomfited. He rubbed his hands ruefully, and shifted from one foot to another. "It is a very serious question. I must go into it fully before I can pretend to say

anything; you have a fine property, but it is heavily burdened, and a good position, an excellent position; but with her fortune my ward has a right to look very high indeed, Sir Thomas," the lawyer said.

"You will not promise me your support?" said Sir Thomas. "I have a hard task before me, I understand, and the consent of a great many people to secure. And how about Miss Trevor's letter," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "she will ask me what you said."

Mr. Rushton grew crimson once more. "It is out of the question," he cried, "the girl is mad, and she will drive me mad. Two or three thousands! only two or three thousand pounds! the other day she made away with six thousand—I declare before heaven she will bring down my gray hairs—no, that's not what I mean to say. But you can't treat money in this way, Sir Thomas, you can't do it, it will make me ill, it will give me a fever, or something. The girl does not know what she is doing. Money! the one thing in the world that you can't treat in this way."

"But the will permits it?" said Sir Thomas with a fictitious look of sympathy.

“Oh, the will, the will is mad too. I dare not take it into a court of law. It would not stand, it could not stand for a moment. And what would be the issue,” cried Mr. Rushton almost weeping, “the money would be divided. The old man would be declared intestate, and the child, Jock as they call him, would take his share. She would deserve it—upon my honour, she would deserve it—but it would cut the property to pieces all the same, and that would be worse than anything. It will drive me out of my senses, I can’t bear this anxiety much longer,” Mr. Rushton said.

Sir Thomas shook his head. “I don’t see how it is to be mended. She has set her heart on carrying out the will, and unless you can show that she has no right—”

“Right, there is no right in it!” Mr. Rushton cried. “She will find out she has me to deal with. I am not a fool like Chervil. I will not give in at the first word; I will make my stand. I will put down my foot.”

“But, my good fellow,” said Sir Thomas, sympathetically; “first word or last word, what can it matter? What can you do against her? The

will give it, and the law allows it—you are helpless—you must give in to her at the last.”

“I won’t!” he said, “or else I’ll throw up the whole concern; it has been nothing but botheration and annoyance. And now my wife at me—and Ray. I’ll wash my hands of the whole matter. I’ll not have my life made a burden to me, not for old Trevor nor for Lucy, nor for any will in the world.”

“Give her to me, and you will be free,” said Sir Thomas, looking at his excited opponent steadily, to conceal the laughter in his own eyes.

He came out of Mr. Rushton’s office an hour after, triumphant, and came along the marketplace, and down the High Street, with a smile upon his face. Sir Tom felt that the ball was at his foot. An air of success and prosperity was about him, which vaguely impressed all the passers-by, and even penetrated through the shows in the shop-windows, and made everybody aware that something fortunate had happened. What had come to him? A fortune had been left him—he had been appointed ambassador somewhere, he had been made an under-secretary of state. All these suggestions were

abroad in Farafield before night—for at this time it was quite early, and the people about were at comparative leisure, and free to remark on what they saw. Something had happened to Sir Tom, and it was something good. The town in general disapproved of many of his ways, but yet liked Sir Tom. It pleased the public to see him streaming along like a procession, with all his colours flying. He went on till he came to the Terrace, pervading the streets like a new gleam of sunshine; but then he stopped short, just as he was about to enter the gateway. Lucy herself was at the window, looking for him. He paused as he was about to go in, then waved his hand to her, and turned the other way. Lucy followed him with her eyes, with astonishment, and disappointment, and consternation. Where could he be going across the Common, away from her though he saw her waiting for him? Sir Tom looked back once more, and waved his hand again when he was half way along the uneven road. He was bound for the White House. He recollected the letter of the will, which Lucy had vowed to keep, though Lucy herself had forgotten the marriage

committee, and Mr. Rushton had this very morning openly scoffed at it. But Sir Thomas was confident in the successfulness of his success. Already of the six votes he had secured three. One more, and all was safe.

Mrs. Stone was in her parlour, like the queen in the ballad, and like that royal lady, was engaged upon a light refecton. She had been worried, and she had been crossed, and teaching is hungry work. The two sisters were strengthening themselves with cake and wine for their work, when Sir Thomas Randolph was suddenly shown into the Queen Anne parlour, taking them by surprise. Sir Tom was not a man to alarm any woman with the mildest claim to personal attractiveness, and he admired the handsome schoolmistress, and was not without an eye to see that even the little Southernwood, with her little old-fashioned curls upon her cheek, had a pretty little figure still, and a complexion which a girl need not have despised. How Sir Tom made it apparent that he saw these personal advantages, it would be hard to say—yet he managed to do so; and in five minutes had made himself as comfortable as the circumstances permitted in one of the lofty Chippendale chairs, and was

talking of most things in heaven and earth in his easy way. The ladies saw, as the people in the streets had seen, that some good fortune had happened to Sir Tom. But he was very wary in his advances, and it was not till a little stir in the passages gave him warning that the girls were flocking in again to their class rooms, and the moment of leisure nearly over, that he ventured on the real object of his visit. It was more difficult than he had thought; he had his back to the window, and the room was not very light, which was a protection to him; but still he had to clear his throat more than once before he began.

"I have a selfish object in this early visit," he said; "you will never divine it. I have come to throw myself on your charity. You have it in your power to make me or to mar me. I want you to give me your consent."

"To what?" Mrs. Stone said, surprised. Was it for a general holiday? was it an indulgence for Lily Barrington, for whom he professed a partiality. What was it? perhaps a *protégée* of doubtful pedigree, whom he wished to put under her care.

Sir Thomas got up, keeping his back to the window. It was not half so easy as dealing with

Mr. Rushton. "It is something about your little pupil, Lucy Trevor."

"O!" Mrs. Stone got up, too. "I want to hear nothing more of Lucy Trevor. I wash my hands of her," she said.

"Ah!" said Miss Southernwood, coming a step closer. She divined immediately, though she was not half so clever as her sister, what it was.

"I am sorry she has displeased you," said Sir Tom. "I want you to let me marry her, Mrs. Stone."

"Marry her!" Mrs. Stone said, almost with a shriek; and then she drew herself up to a great deal more than her full height, as she knew very well how to do. "I have taken an interest in her, and she has disappointed me," she said; "and as to consenting or not consenting, all that is nonsense nowadays. It might have answered last century, but now it is obsolete." Then she made him a stately curtsy. "I could have nothing to oppose to Sir Thomas Randolph, even if I meant to oppose at all," she said.

Miss Southernwood came up to him as the door closed on her sister.

"Was this what she meant all the time?" asked the milder woman. "It was you she was thinking of all the time? Well, I do not blame

her, and I hope you may be very happy. But, Sir Thomas, tell Lucy that I rely upon her to do nothing more in the matter we were talking of. It could not be done, it would not be possible to have it done; but, surely, surely, you could make it up between you to poor Frank. There are so many appointments that would suit him, if he had good friends that would take a little trouble. I do think, Sir Thomas, that it might be made up to Frank."

Miss Southernwood, after all, was the best partizan and most staunch supporter; but it was strange that she, who had not originated, nay, who had disapproved of her sister's scheme in respect to Frank St. Clair, should be the one to insist upon a compensation to that discomfited hero.

Lucy was still standing at the window when Sir Tom came back. He made signs of great despondency when he came in sight, and alarmed her.

"She will not give me her consent, though I made sure of it," he said. "Lucy, what shall we do if we cannot get Mrs. Stone's consent?"

"Her consent!" said Lucy, with momentary surprise. Then she made her first rebellion against all she had hitherto considered most sacred. "I think we might do without it," she said

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END.

THERE was one thing which Sir Thomas got out of his matrimonial arrangements which was more than he expected, and that was a great deal of fun. After he had received, in the way above described, the angry submission of the two whom he chiefly feared, he had entered into the spirit of the thing, and determined that he would faithfully obey the will, and obtain the assent of all that marriage committee, who were expected to make Lucy's marrying so difficult a matter. He was even visited by some humorous compunctions as he went on. The entire failure of poor old Trevor's precautions on this point awakened a kind of sympathetic regret in his mature mind. "Poor old fellow!" he said; "pro-

bably I was the last person he would have given his heiress to : most likely all these fences were made to keep me out :” he laughed ; yet he felt a kind of sympathy for the old man, who, indeed, however, would have had no such objection to Sir Thomas as Sir Thomas thought. Next morning Lucy’s suitor went to the Rector, who, to be sure, had it in his power to stop the whole proceedings, advanced as they were. But the Rector had heard, by some of the subtle secret modes of communication which convey secrets, of something going on, and patted Sir Thomas on the shoulder.

“My dear Sir Tom,” he said, “I never for a moment attached any importance to the vote given to me. Why should I interfere with Miss Trevor’s marriage ? Your father-in-law that is to be (if one can speak in the future tense of a person who is in the past,) entertained some odd ideas. He was an excellent man, I have not a doubt on that point, but—— Now what could I know about it, for instance ? I know Lucy—she’s a very nice girl, my girls like what they have seen of her immensely ; but I know nothing about her surroundings. I am inclined to think

she is very lucky to have fallen into no worse hands than yours."

"The compliment is dubious," said Sir Tom, "but I accept it; and I may take it for granted that I have your consent?"

"Certainly, certainly, you have my consent. I never thought of it but as a joke. That old man—I beg your pardon—your father-in-law, must have had queer ideas about many things. I hear he left his heiress great latitude about spending—allowed her, in short, to give away her money."

"I wonder how you heard that?"

"Ah! upon my word I can scarcely tell you. Common talk. They say, by the way, she is going to give a fortune to Katie Russell on her marriage with young Rainy, the schoolmaster; compensation, that! Rainy (who is a young prig, full of Dissenting blood, though it suits him to be a Churchman) no doubt, thought he had a good chance for the heiress herself."

"Don't speak any worse than you can help of my future relations," said Sir Tom, with a laugh; "it might make things awkward after-

wards," upon which the Rector perceived that he had gone half a step too far.

"Rainy is a very respectable fellow, there is not a word to be said against him. I wish I could say as much for all my own relations," he said; "but, Randolph, as I am a kind of a guardian, you know, take my advice in one thing. It is all very fine to be liberal; but I would not let her throw her money away."

Sir Tom made no direct reply. He shook the Rector's hand, and laughed. "I'll tell Lucy you send her your blessing," he said.

And then he went off in a different direction, from the fine old red-brick Rectory, retired in its grove of trees, to the little, somewhat shabby street in which Mr. Williamson, the Dissenting minister, resided—if a man can be said to reside in a back street. The house was small and dingy, the door opening into a very narrow passage, hung with coats and hats, for Mr. Williamson, as was natural, had a large family. It was only after an interval of running up and downstairs, and subdued calling of one member of the household after another, that the minister was unearthed and brought from the little back

room, called his study, in his slippers and a very old coat, to receive the unlikely visitor. Sir Thomas Randolph! what could he want? There is always a certain alarm in a humble household attendant upon the unexpectedness of such a visit. Could anything have happened? Could some one have gone wrong, was the anxious question of the Williamsons, as the minister was roused, and gently pushed into the parlour where Sir Thomas, surrounded by all the grim gentility of the household gods, was awaiting him. The mother and daughters were on tiptoe in the back-room, not listening at the door certainly, but with excited ears ready for every movement. The vague alarm that they felt was reflected in the minister's face. Sir Thomas Randolph! What could he want? It was a relief to Mr. Williamson when he heard what it was; but he was not so easy in his assent as the Rector. He took a seat near the suitor, with an air of great importance replacing the vague distrust and fear that had been in his face.

"It is a great trust, Sir Thomas," he said. "And I must be faithful. You will not expect me to do anything against my conscience. Lucy

Trevor is a lamb of the flock, though spiritually no longer under my charge ; her mother was an excellent woman, and our late friend, Mr. Trevor— This is an altogether unexpected application, you must allow me to think it over. I owe it to— to our late excellent friend who committed this trust to my unworthy hands.”

“I thought,” said Sir Tom ; “that it was a matter of form merely ; but,” he added, with a better inspiration, “I quite see how, to a delicate sense of duty like yours, it must take an aspect—”

“That is it, Sir Thomas—that is it ;” Mr. Williamson said. “I must be faithful at whatever cost. Yourself now, you will excuse me ; there are reports—”

“A great many, and at one time very well-founded,” said Sir Thomas, with great seriousness, looking his judge in the face.

This took the good minister by surprise, and the steady look confused him. A great personage, the greatest man in the county, a baronet, a man whose poverty (for he was known to be poor) went beyond Mr. Williamson’s highest realization of riches ! It gave the excellent

minister's bosom an expansion of solemn pride, and, at the same time, a thrill of alarm. Persecution is out of date; but to stand up in the presence of one of the great ones of the earth, and convict him of evil—this is still occasionally possible. Mr. Williamson rose to the grandeur of his position. Such an opportunity had never been given to him before, and might never be again.

“I am glad that you do not attempt to deny it, Sir Thomas; but at the same time there is a kind of bravado that boasts of evil-doing. I hope that is not the source of your frankness. The happiness of an innocent young girl is a precious trust, Sir Thomas. Unless we have guarantees of your change of life, and that you are taking a more serious view of your duties, how can I commit such a trust into your hands?”

“What kind of guarantees can I offer?” said Sir Thomas, with great seriousness. “I cannot give securities for my good conduct, can I? I will cordially agree to anything that your superior wisdom and experience can suggest.”

“Do not speak of my wisdom, for I have none

—experience, perhaps I may have a little; and I think we must have guarantees.”

“With all my heart—if you will specify the kind,” Sir Thomas said.

But here the good minister was very much at a loss—for he did not in the least know what kind of guarantees could be given, or taken. He was not accustomed to have his word taken so literally. He cleared his throat, and a flush came over his countenance, and he murmured “Ah!” and “Oh!” and all the other monosyllables in which English difficulty takes refuge. “You must be aware,” he said, “Sir Thomas, not that I mean to be disagreeable—that there are many things in your past life calculated to alarm the guardians.”

“But, my dear Sir, when I confess it,” said Sir Thomas, “when I admit it! when I ask only—tell me what guarantees I can give—what I can do, or say—”

“Guarantees are necessary—certainly guarantees are necessary,” said the minister shaking his head; and then he gave to his attentive hearer a little sermon upon marriage, which was one of the good man’s favourite subjects. Sir Tho-

mas listened with great gravity and sympathy. He subdued the twinkle in his eyes—he wanted to take advantage of the honorable estate. He said very little and allowed his Mentor to discourse freely. And nothing was said further about guarantees. Mr. Williamson gave his consent with *effusion* before the interview was over. “You have seen the folly of a careless life,” he said, “I cannot but hope that your heart is touched, Sir Thomas, and that all the virtues of maturity will develop in you; and if my poor approval and blessing can do you any good, you have it. I am not of those who think much of, neither do I belong to a denomination which gives special efficacy to—any man’s benediction; but as Jacob blessed Joseph, I give you my blessing.” Then as his visitor rose content, and offered him his hand, an impulse of hospitality came over the good man. “My wife would say I was letting you go coldly, without offering you anything; but I believe it is quite out of fashion to drink wine in the morning—which is a very good thing, an excellent thing. But if you will come to tea—any afternoon, Sir Thomas. If you will bring Lucy to tea!”

Afterwards, after the door was shut, the minister darted out again and called after his visitor. "My wife says if you would name an afternoon, or if Lucy would write to her what day we may expect you,—not to make preparations," said the minister waving his hand, "but in case we should be out, or engaged."

Sir Thomas promised fervently. "You shall certainly hear a day or two before we come," he said, and walked away with a smile on his face. To be sure he never meant to go back to tea, but his conscience did not smite him. He had got off safe and sound without any guarantees.

"Now there is only my aunt's consent to get," he said when he had gone back to the Terrace. "We have stuck to the very letter of the will, and you see all has gone well. I am going off to Fairhaven to-morrow. I know she is there."

"But must you ask her consent? you know she will give it," Lucy said.

"How do I know she will give it. Perhaps she would prefer to keep you to herself." Lucy smiled at the thought; but Sir Thomas did not feel so sure. His aunt meant him to marry Lucy

eventually; but that was a very different thing from carrying her off now.

When Sir Thomas went away, Lucy had a great many visitors. Even Mrs. Rushton came, embarrassed, but doing her best to look at her ease. "Why did you not tell me that this was going on, you silly child? I should have understood everything, I should have made allowances for everything. But perhaps he had never come to the point till the other day? Mr. Rushton and Raymond send you their very best wishes. And Emmy has hopes that after seeing so much of each other all the autumn you will choose her for one of your bridesmaids, Lucy. And I wish you every happiness, my dear," Mrs. Rushton cried, kissing her with a little enthusiasm, having talked all her embarrassment away. Lucy was surprised by this change, but she was no casuist, and she did not inquire into it. It was a relief which she accepted thankfully. Mrs. Stone came also with her congratulations, "Lady Randolph was very wise to forestall everybody," she said. "And Lucy, I shall be very glad to have you near me, to watch how you go on in your new life. Never hesitate to come to me in a

difficulty." This was the way in which she took her pupil's elevation. Had Lucy been raised to a throne, she would have made a similar speech to her. She would have felt that she could instruct her how to reign. As for Mr. St. Clair, Lucy still had much trouble to go through on his account. She was very reluctant to give up her scheme for his help, but at last after a great many interviews with Miss Southernwood, was got to perceive that the thing to be done was to make Sir Thomas, "find an appointment" for her unfortunate suitor. "He can easily do it," said Miss Southernwood with that innocent faith in influence, which so many good people still retain.

Bertie Russell disappeared from Farafield on the day after the advent of Sir Thomas. He was the most angry of all Lucy's suitors, and he put her this time into his book, in colours far from flattering. But fortunately nobody knew her, and the deadly assault was never found out, not even by its immediate victim, for like many writers of fiction, and indeed like most who are worth their salt, Bertie was not successful in the portraiture of real character. His fancy was too much for his malevolence, and his evil intentions thus did no harm.

Sir Thomas travelled as fast as expresses could take him to the house in which his aunt was paying one of her many Autumn visits—for I need not say that she had returned from Homburg some time before. The house was called Fairhaven. It was the house of a distinguished explorer and discoverer; and the company assembled there included various members of Lady Randolph's special "society." When Sir Thomas walked into the room, where, all the male portion of the party being still in the covers, the ladies were seated at tea, his aunt rose to meet him from out of a little group of her friends. Her privy council, that dread secret tribunal by which her life was judged, were all about her in the twilight and firelight. When his name was announced, to the great surprise of everybody, Lady Randolph rose up with a similar but much stronger sense of vague alarm than that which had moved the minister the previous day. "Tom!" she cried, with surprise which she tried to make joyful; but indeed she was frightened, not knowing what kind of news he might have come to tell. Mrs. Berry-Montagu, who was sitting as usual with her back to the light, though

there was so little of that, gave a little nod and glance aside to Lady Betsinda, who was seated high in a throne-like antique chair, and did not care how strong the light was which fell on her old shiny black satin and yellow lace. "I told you!" said Mrs. Berry-Montagu. She thought all her friend's hopes, so easily penetrated by those keen-eyed spectators, were about to be thrown to the ground—and the desire to observe "how she would bear it," immediately stirred up those ladies to the liveliest interest. Sir Thomas, however, when he had greeted his aunt, sat down with his usual friendly ease, and had some tea. He was quite ready to answer all their questions, and he was not shy about his good news, but ready to unfold them whenever it might seem most expedient so to do.

"Straight from the Hall?" Lady Randolph said, with again a tremor. Did this mean that he had been making preparations for his setting out?

"I got there three days ago," said Sir Tom; "poor old house, it is a pity to see it so neglected. It is not such a bad house—"

"A bad house! there is nothing like it in the

county. If I could but see you oftener there, Tom," his aunt cried, in spite of herself.

Sir Tom smiled, pleased with the consciousness which had not yet lost its amusing aspect ; but he did not make any reply.

"He likes his own way," said Lady Betsinda, "I don't blame him. If I were a young man—and he is still a young man—I'd take my swing. When he marries, then he'll range himself, like all the rest, I suppose."

"Lady Betsinda talks like a book—as she always does," said Sir Tom with his great laugh, "when I marry, everything shall be changed."

"That desirable consummation is not very near at hand one can see," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, out of the shadows, in her thin, fine voice.

Sir Tom laughed again. There was something frank, and hearty, and joyous in the sound of his big laugh ; it tempted other people to laugh too, even when they did not know what it was about. And Lady Randolph did not in the least know what it was about—yet the laugh gained her in spite of herself.

"*Apropos* of marriage," said Mrs. Montagu

once more, "have you seen little Miss Trevor in your wilds, Sir Tom? Our young author has gone off there, on simulated duty of a domestic kind, but to try his best for the heiress, I am sure. Do you think he has a chance? I am interested," said the little lady. "Come, the latest gossip! you must know all about it. In a country neighbourhood every scrap is worth its weight in gold."

"I know all about it," said Sir Tom.

"That you may be sure he does; where does all the gossip come from but from the men? we are never so thorough. He'll give you the worst of it, you may take my word for that. But I like that little Lucy Trevor," cried old Lady Betsinda; "she was a nice, modest little thing. She never looked her money; she was more like a little girl at home, a little kitten to play with. I hope she is not going to have the author. I always warned you, Mary Randolph, not to let her have to do with authors, and that sort of people—but you never take my advice till it's too late."

"She is not going to marry the author," said Sir Tom, with another laugh: and then he rose

up, almost stumbling over the tea-table. "My dear ladies," he said, "who are so much interested in Lucy Trevor, the fact is that the author never had the slightest chance. She is going to marry—me. And I have come, Aunt Mary, if you please, to ask if you will kindly give your consent? The other guardians have been good enough to approve of me," he added, making her a bow, "and I hope I may not owe my disappointment to you."

"The other guardians——! Tom!" cried Lady Randolph, falling upon him, and seizing him with both hands, "is this true?"

Sir Tom kissed her hand with a grace which he was capable of when he pleased, and drew it within his arm.

"I presume, then," he said, as he led her away, "that I shall get your consent too"

Thus old Mr. Trevor's will was fulfilled. It was not fulfilled in the way he wished or thought of, but what then? He thought it would have kept his daughter unmarried, whereas, her mourning for him was not ended when she became Lady Randolph—which she did very soon after the above scene, to the apparent content of everybody. Even

Philip Rainy looked upon the arrangement with satisfaction. Taking Lucy's fortune to redeem the great Randolph estate, and to make his little cousin the first woman in the county, was not like giving it "to another fellow:" which was the thing he had not been able to contemplate with patience. The popular imagination, indeed, was more struck with the elevation of little Lucy Trevor to be the mistress of the Hall, than with Sir Thomas's good fortune in becoming the husband of the greatest heiress in England. But when his settlements were signed, both the guardians, Mr. Chervil and Mr. Rushton, took the bridegroom elect aside.

"We cannot do anything for you about that giving-away clause," Mr. Chervil said, shaking his head.

"But Sir Thomas is not the man I take him for, if he don't find means to keep that in check," said Mr. Rushton.

Sir Tom made no reply, and neither of these gentlemen could make out what was meant by the humorous curves about his lips, and the twinkle in his eye.





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